


# DIALOGHI CON I LETTORI [1960-1970]

# PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

# WISE
# ON POLITICS
# AND ABOUT SOCIETY

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Chronology by Nico Naldini

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# DIALOGUES WITH READERS[1960-1970]

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From “Dialogues with Pasolini” on «Vie Nuove»

As always, Mrs. Macciocchi won. I'm washing. And I am on the threshold of exhaustion: because to all this we must add the continuous, daily struggle against the offensive of the fascists and clericals, and, finally, good last, in this list, but first, in reality, the life that I have to live, in all its contradictory extension and complication: otherwise, above all, what would I be working on? I'm working on three screenplays, I'm preparing a film of which I will be the director, I'm correcting the drafts of a six hundred page volume of essays, I'm organizing a novel on which, ultimately, I'm aiming everything now, I'm writing verses and articles, according to the intermittences and obsessions of my vocation and profession: I don't even have time to breathe, as they say

But Mrs. Macciocchi overcame every difficulty, came straight to my house, and touched my heart. She gave me, almost as a sweet duty, a "correspondence" with the readers of "Vie Nuove": one hour a week, finally, I could even find her! I accepted. But I'm still not sure what I've accepted. All in all, it is better that the matter settles itself, at the free impulses of the readers and under the patronage of the director...

For me, I have had recent experiences of "dialogue" with the non-specialist public: and they have been wonderful experiences. I started a few months ago in Ancona, where they asked me to give a conference: but I didn't want to be a lecturer, I didn't want to bore myself or the public with a chat that is only entertaining if well recited, that is, if demagogic: and then I proposed a "public press conference": the listeners would ask me free questions, and I would answer. It went very well: no one was bored, even though the dialogue lasted for more than two hours. Since then I have always done this, in many other cities, where they asked me to go and speak: and I have wonderful memories of all these chats, a sense of profound sympathy for my interlocutors. I would think of doing something similar here, in a corner of «Vie Nuove» and, we hope, similarly useful and vital.

n. 22, 28 May 1960

I believe that I will no longer read anything that bears your signature if I have not first understood the reasons, the necessity and the meaning of the abdication to language that your prose works and especially the last one

show. Why - I ask myself - if you want to represent the "real" life of certain (large and fundamental) areas of Italian society, do you necessarily have to use their worst language? Just because it's the most true? Certainly in A Violent Life there are very interesting insights into a new "written language", but they remain overshadowed by the prevalent use of that "particular" language. I believe that Pavese has resolved in the most historically correct way the abyss that exists today between the traditional "written language" and the "spoken language". In my opinion, forcefully introducing the most common dialect into literary works is denouncing that abyss, but not bridging it.

*Roberto M. Di Marco - Palermo*

You are from Palermo: so I will begin by telling you a literary anecdote that is close to you: the Sicilian dialect poet Di Giovanni wrote a letter to Verga one day, reproaching him for not being rigorous, that is, for not bringing his poetics of interior monologue (i.e. speaking in the name of the character) up to the extreme consequence: the dialect. Verga hesitated, beating the bush a bit, replying - exactly as she wants - that he hadn't reached the point of dialect to be understood by all Italian readers. Despite this air of compromise, which was not very rigorous, Verga was instinctively right. However, mind you, he had not ignored the dialect at all: indeed the dialect is the essential reagent of his prose, which is, thus, a contamination between language and dialect.

I too (forgive the presumption!), before the Roman novels, had written a novel set in Friuli, among the laborers of the Bassa: and in this novel (which is unpublished) I instinctively excluded the Friulian dialect, precisely because it was incomprehensible to the greatest number of readers in my country. And a contamination, albeit slight, between language and dialect was born. Now, for the Roman dialect, I had no reason not to reach the dialect: the Roman dialect, in fact, is a dialect very similar to the Florentine, understandable throughout Italy, as a whole (with the exception of the lexicon of the underworld: which, moreover, does not requires a slight effort on the part of the reader): why, then, shouldn't I use Roman dialect in direct dialogue? And use contamination in the narrative text which is basically a long free indirect discourse?

A realist writer cannot ignore the presence of the other social class: the one that speaks neither his instrumental language nor his literary language: but speaks dialect. However, I'm not saying that he necessarily has to use

dialect! Just don't ignore it. As for the rest, I hate any normalization from above, any restrictive and coercive purpose. Italy is linguistically a Tower of Babel: and the problem must not be solved by ignoring it. This is what those behind censorship do when they believe they can solve the problem of poverty, prostitution, etc. by forcing it to be ignored and not represented.

n. 25, 18 June 1960

For some time now we have had literary production with a purely sexual background, with raw language and without hesitation. The question that arises is this: are the tendencies or preferences of the readers determining this state of affairs or, vice versa, is it the new literature that tends to influence the reading public in a more or less attractive way? I manage one of the busiest bookstores in Catania and it is impressive, for me, that the most requested titles are, for example: The Warrior's Rest, Lolita, The Cousins, Peyton's Sinners, Dangerous Women, etc. His Una vita violente and Ragazzi di vita were also very successful, in my opinion, for the same reasons.

Nuccio Costa - Catania

The thing is quite simple, it seems to me. The enormous majority of readers belong to the middle and small bourgeoisie (big landowners and big industrialists generally don't read; workers don't have money to buy books, and have to make do with loans or in libraries). Now the Italian middle and small bourgeoisie is in the midst of a neo-capitalist phase: a certain well-being and a profound intellectual and ideological involution. Evasion is a typical fact of these states of involution. And erotic literature has always had a great place in escapism. (I would like to point out that I have not read any of the books you list: except Lolita, which seems to me to be a very remarkable product. As for my books, the case is different: there, perhaps, what attracts the "evasive" reader is the freedom of language, not the erotic topic, which is not there.)

Must the evolution of women necessarily lead to that more or less free freedom that man enjoys in our current society, or are there, for the representatives of the so-called "weaker sex", limitations imposed by the different physiological order? And more precisely: should a woman feel authorized to behave like a man, or have a moral limit that, in this case, could be defined as "exquisite"?

*Marco Berba - Vercelli*

Woman is not man. So when we say that women, in any field, have the same rights as men, we mean that these rights must be sized to the different possibilities of the two different sexes. It's hard to imagine a woman being a porter. Nonetheless, it can be safely stated that women have the same right as men to be a porter.

In the sexual field, the "sentimental" characteristics of men and women are different. In very simple words: the male is characterized by research, the female by waiting. It is difficult to imagine a girl who, mounted on a Lambretta, goes in search of males, just as it is difficult to imagine a young man who spends Sunday sitting on the wall of the bridge waiting for females to look for him.

Even if she is endowed with maximum sexual freedom, which theoretically totally equals her to man, a woman will not be able to ignore her sexual and sentimental characteristics, dominated by that "exquisiteness" that she calls. Only this "exquisiteness" will no longer be a myth, a revenge for the sexual repression to which, in many areas of modern society, women are still forced: but a conscious biological fact.

Current society is profoundly ill with sexphobia, that is, there are insurmountable "taboos" for everything that concerns love not spiritually understood, and this above all due to the influence of Catholic morality. What I cannot understand, although not entirely excuse, are the reasons why the press that fights for the emancipation of the working classes does not sufficiently address this problem and, when it does, it suffers, in part, from the hypocritical current morality . Nor can I explain well, also due to lack of documentation, that return to a form of puritanism that can be seen - as documented by the letters published some time ago by «New Generation» - in young Soviet people.

Paolo Boccaletti - Modena

His impressions are right. There is some prudery in the Italian communist press: at times, certain articles in L'Unità seem to be written with the prohibitionist anguish of an old spinster. And even «Vie Nuove» (let's say it brutally) is not joking... But the thing can be explained very well: at the origins of the Marxist choice of a bourgeois (and bourgeois by origin are, naturally, also part of the communist leaders) there is an irrational moral

impetus. And this morality, often indignant - with sacrosanct indignation - informs all subsequent behavior. The sexual problem - which you mention - is evidently not a moral problem: but, since the Catholic petty bourgeoisie is accustomed, hypocritically, to considering it as such, the average communist leader also considers it as such, as, I would say, out of inertia. In fact, the issue has never been clearly stated: since it is a secondary issue. There are more important issues to address and resolve. Nonetheless, an operation of irrationality on the part of Marxists would be desirable: in fact, by identifying irrationality with the irrationality of decadentism, they ignore it. But irrationality (in which the sexual problem is part) is a category of the human soul: and is therefore an always current and urgent problem.

n. 26, 25 June 1960

## PASTERNAK AND IRRATIONALITY

Pasternak's recent death gives me the opportunity to ask you some questions. I was, at the time, very struck by the harshness of the criticism directed at the writer for Doctor Zhivago. Now, in my opinion, the artist is made up of a thousand mixtures, of a thousand passions, of a thousand contradictions (blessed!) that cannot absolutely and not always be brought back to a single common ideological, ethical, political denominator within which to strictly feel, produce, work. .

*Can the intimate poetic feeling of an artist be fully realized in a society based on a conception of life that provides for a total hegemony of society over the individual?*

*Couldn't a personality of this type therefore express itself in a socialist society if not by becoming a "rebel" (pointed with a finger), or even worse, a "foreigner" (solitary and abandoned) in one's own country?*

*Augusto Quieto - Ventimiglia*

Responding to a letter that asked me for my opinion on a certain excessive moralism of the left-wing press, especially with regards to sexual matters, I quickly stated, and without giving details, my opinion that one of the gaps in Marxist thought, in the current moment of its evolution, is not to face, with its ideological and rational tools, the problem of irrationality.

Marxists generally simply identify irrationality with the "historical" irrationality of decadentism: and they do not take into account that there is a categorical irrationality in man (what you call blessed passions and

contradictions) which evolves historically, takes on various attitudes, various aspects depending on the society in which the individual - his custodian - operates.

It will be necessary for Marxist thought to decide to fill this gap, which generates confusions and messes: in fact, it will never be possible to judge historically the literature - even great - of European decadentism, if we do not have precise and defined ideas on the notion of "irrationality", and not only on that of irrationalism. I want to give you an example that is perhaps a little pedantic. Have you read Aeschylus' Orestiad? I recently worked on it to translate it. The content of the Orestiad is essentially political: the substitution of a democratic state - albeit a crudely democratic one - for a tyrannical and archaic state. The culmination of the trilogy is the moment in which the goddess Athena (Reason: born from the mind of the father: that is, devoid of uterine, maternal, irrational experience) establishes the assembly of citizens who judge with the right to vote. But the tragedy does not end here. After Athena's rational intervention, the Erinyes - unleashed, archaic, instinctive forces of nature - survive: and they are goddesses, they are immortal. They cannot be eliminated, they cannot be killed. They must transform themselves, leaving their substantial irrationality intact: that is, change them from "Curses" into "Blessings". I repeat, the Italian Marxists have not asked themselves this problem: nor - as far as I know - the Russian ones.

In Italy the times are probably premature: Athena's intervention has not yet occurred. In Russia, on the contrary, Athena's intervention took place: now the appendix to the intervention is missing: that is, the transformation of the Curses into Blessings (the desperate and anarchic bourgeois irrationalism, in the... new irrationalism).

Pasternak was wrong in not even asking himself this problem: and in having resolved his irrationality - and the categorical irrationality of man - using the terms and tools of bourgeois culture, which has survived in him since his education. This is why his work could not gain sympathy in Russia: one saw in it a return, a regression, a reaction. And not without reason. But now the Russians must get to work to counter Pasternak's ideology not with ostracism but with an integrated and full ideology.

## WORLD LIFE

*How do you, who like to call yourself a Marxist, think you can reconcile the disgust, in your books and in all your writings or conferences, for the society in which you live, with your constant participation, as a Pasolini-man, in the social life of the capital?*

*Isn't it your sacrosanct Marxist fury, inconsistent with your desire to get busy with your bourgeois friends in order to be able to put your pen everywhere, often be in the news, in short, lead a "bourgeois" life in all respects?*

*Roberto Salvadori - Florence*

Even Cassola, in the course of one of our, otherwise friendly, literary polemics, makes his own accusation against me. But excuse me, on Sundays, or in the evenings of good weather, don't you go for a walk with your friends in the center of the city, where, as you use in every Italian city, the "walking" takes place? And Cassola, won't you go along the Corso di Grosseto, where the beautiful ladies and the best young people go up and down? Those who live in Rome go for a walk in Via Veneto. I almost never go there: once a month, rather less than more. But when I go there, I find photographers there, who... stare at that adventitious presence of mine for eternity. As for the headlines, beautiful! If you knew how much I care! But you can't escape the rotogravure and the newspaper, because you can't disappear.

After all, I hate every moralistic and mystical form of life: it would be foolish for me to become a hermit in the name of Marxism. But believe me, my worldly life doesn't exist: it's a pure collage of journalistic news. In the last four or five months, here is the work I have done: five screenplays (La vita screamata, The long night of '43, La giorno balorda, The tank, Il Gobbo del Quarticciolo), and I have started a sixth ( that of my film, Accattone); I translated Aeschylus' Orestiad; I started my new book (La Mortaccia), wrote some verses, and many articles, responded to investigations, etc. Do you think that when someone works in this way they have time to dedicate themselves to worldly life?

n. 28, 9 July 1960

## THE AWAKENING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Sorry for the originality, but I would like to ask your opinion on the "non-crisis" of young Italians. I'm talking about the latest generation, the one

between the ages of sixteen and twenty who made his presence felt in the squares of Genoa in defense of anti-fascist ideals. And that of Genoa does not seem to me to be an isolated case. Young people were present in Licata, Palermo, Florence, Rome, wherever freedom and justice could be openly defended. It makes me think, faced with these facts, that some good examples work with a delay. Between the generation that waged the partisan war and the one that is in the limelight today, it seems to me that there has been a long sleep, at least if I am to believe the much talk of a "crisis" that has been made in the newspapers. Or was it all a fabrication and the crisis was only in the head of those who talked about the crisis?

*Rodolfo Bellini — Florence*

You pose me the most difficult problem imaginable. I have always avoided it, because it seems so complex and elusive to me that it presents itself not only as unsolvable, but as indefinable.

There is nothing more labile than the period of youth, "from sixteen to twenty", as you define it: more labile in an absolute sense, given the cruelty of time that flies inexorably, and also in a specific sense: if I I think about how ephemeral the historical life of a man in Italy is, I am terrified by the elusiveness of his youth. Meanwhile, it is impossible to establish an "average": you know that Italy lives at various economic, cultural and historical levels. This variety of levels is refracted in individuals, making them cases that are always a little impalpable, elusive, difficult to define. On the other hand, this does not protect them from the standard, from conformism, which equalizes and... levels. In fact, conventionality, conformism, standardization can only be overcome with critical conscience, with a high, developed, adult, civilized sense: and this unfortunately is not the case with Italians, who are therefore on the one hand unstable, mysterious, irrational - tending to escape the definitions of the "average" - on the other hand they are elementary equalized and codified - tending to always fall within a mechanically fixed average type.

This double face, this historical and psychological uncertainty, is found even more accentuated in young people.

And then add the fact that young generations follow one another without interruption: the sixteen-year-old who becomes seventeen is immediately replaced by a fifteen-year-old who becomes sixteen.

For all these reasons I feel lost in answering you. The facts are there, she tells me. And then, remaining with the facts, I must confess to you that -

although these facts are still few, and although it is not yet possible to draw an average from them - they justify my fundamental optimism. I know that the best Italians are young people, from sixteen to twenty years old: by far the best. They are still on the threshold of social life, and they see only the purest ideals of it: they are not yet contaminated, corrupted, debased, leveled, frightened by it (note that I am talking about Italian society, not society in general). They are still free, available, they can "believe". The fundamental vice of Catholic petty-bourgeois society, namely cowardice, has not yet infected them. For this reason, in the period in which there was so much talk about teddy boys, I always said that this is a particular phenomenon, of some area where capitalism is particularly developed economically but not, necessarily, culturally.

There cannot be a crisis of youth: its only crisis is a crisis of growth. There was, however, a crisis in Italian society: or, rather, a relapse: after the sudden and miraculous recovery from fascism, through the Resistance. This relapse, which reaches its most acute phase in recent days, with Tambroni's MSI government, has naturally also been reflected in young people, if this category can legitimately be made. Years of darkness over Italy, and years of darkness over Italian youth.

The awakening that you notice in young people is an awakening that is also noticed in those who are not young, in those of our generation. The clerical-fascists are stretching the rope too much: and the patience of Italian workers, young and old, has a limit. What is heartbreaking is that young people - fortunately a small part - give their freshness, their availability, their confused thirst for ideals, to the hysterical and anarchic remnants of fascism...

## A SYSTEM FOR STUDYING

*I am a young man of twenty, like many others. It's true that my destiny is very different from that of others, because I find myself in a nursing home and, moreover, with limited financial possibilities: my parents are in fact workers. I have dedicated myself to the study of Italian literature, but now I would like to delve a little deeper and study the poets. I asked many publishers for help in providing me with used books but I got nothing from it. Now I turn to you for help: what are the books I should study? Which poets should I study further? What is the best system for these studies?*

*Angelo Maffini, G. Aselli Health Institute - Cremona*

If your desire to learn is authentic and long-lasting, you are perhaps in the best moment of your life. I remember when it was my turn. What days! I spent hours and hours at the «Portico della Morte», in Bologna, where used books were sold, choosing, reading titles, spying on pages and indexes. I was fifteen years old, and until then I had only read adventure books (in Cremona, where I lived for three years); then suddenly I came across Dostoewsky's The Idiot, and it was a revelation. I read all of Dostoewsky, and then Tolstoy: and then Shakespeare's tragedies. Only a year or two later I discovered contemporary poetry, thanks to a young high school teacher of mine, a poet himself, Mario Rinaldi. And then I read Montale's The Opportunities and Ungaretti's Sentimento del Tempo: which were revelation number two.

I started reading like a desperation the contemporary poets, who at the time were the Hermetic poets: and from them I went back to the symbolists, especially Rimbaud. And, naturally, I continued to read voraciously the narrators of the nineteenth century: the Russians, the English, the French.

As you can see, there was no "plan" of readings: things arose by themselves. You have a lot of time, I imagine, in the House where you are: therefore, patiently, begin by letting yourself rely on chance. Maybe keep as a guide the history of Italian literature by De Sanctis, which is so evocative, and, at the same time, the more modern one by Sapegno. However, I would advise you to start with contemporary writers: they are much easier to understand in their true value, in their true historical context. For the classics, a difficult philological and historicistic training is often necessary, and it often happens - by reading them like this, instinctively - to fall into distorting misunderstandings. After having learned to "read" about your contemporaries you can approach the classics with more experience and more sensitivity.

n. 29, 16 July 1960

## REALISM AND NEOPURISM

*Allow me to put to you two questions (connected to each other) which closely concern your activity as a writer and theorist of certain theses which then find the most convincing practical realization in your novels.*

*I am referring to the question of language in the work of art in relation to "realism" and the "obligatory" use of dialect - or rather dialects - when*

*writing about people or social groups who in reality express themselves in dialect or jargon.*

*1) realism-language relationship: does it not seem to you that taking realism for granted at the hands of one or more neopurists (I am referring to his discourse "in the manner of Antonio") is an insistence on formal, multipurpose aspects and neglecting the substance that As far as the possibility of defining a writer as a realist is concerned, is it in other questions? That is, it is no longer right to examine whether he - as a writer - is more or less rooted in reality, what is his critical attitude towards it, his judgment of the world, and what is his "ideological" position, i.e. his capacity or otherwise to keep in mind the general lines of development of the society it represents, the "mass feelings"?*

*Measured by this yardstick - which does not mean caring which party they prefer at all - some of the writers whom you positively cited in your Oration against Cassola might prove not to be "high" enough to be enlisted in the ranks of the royalist army. It may instead be that others - who could be... soldiers (perhaps subsistence) - end up being left in plain clothes by his criteria.*

2) language-dialect relationship: this is a question that immediately derives from the first as soon as we go deeper into verifying his theories. I am specifically aware of your conference held in Naples on behalf of the ACI and the "Marxist" concept, in my opinion abundantly "mechanistic", expressed by you in relation to language (which would be radically transformed - as a superstructure? - in the transformation of the structure of society). Indeed, according to you - if I'm not mistaken - the "Marxist" writer (who would then be the one who begins to narrate the proletariat or the sub-proletariat, taking care to overcome Enlightenment or populist positions) should - even before the transformation of the basis of society - grasp the language of social groups that present themselves at the forefront of history by claiming hegemonic positions and thus also starting a new chapter in the history of language. In the magazine «Le reasoning narratives» (2nd issue) the writer Mario Pomilio compared - in the course of a long essay on bilingualism - his position to that already criticized by Stalin in a famous essay from 1950, by N. Y. Marr.

*I confess that the comparison seems interesting to me and, ultimately, sustainable. What do you think? Or rather: what opposes this reference to a*

*previous schematism (so extremist and "counterproductive" that it was fought by Stalin)?*

*Excuse me if I call you directly into question but the issues that I have quickly mentioned here seem to me to be of great interest to everyone (writers and readers).*

*Andrea Resta - Naples*

I will only answer the first of your questions. In fact, the second, first of all, involves me too personally - and I would like to avoid talking too much about myself - and then implies a rereading of Stalin's criticism, as well as the reading - which I have never done - of N.Y. Marr. But I hope that by answering the first question, the answer to the second is also implicit.

First of all, I have never considered the use of dialect in a realistic literary work to be "obligatory". As I have already specified in this same column, I only think that an Italian realist writer cannot ignore the division of Italian society into two social classes: the bourgeois class that uses sloppy, instrumental and televisual Italian (the so-called koinè) and the popular class that uses various dialects. Then a writer, after having made this necessary consideration, believes it is best to take dialects to the most select linguistic level, eliminating them completely, and transforming them into essayistic or lyrical prose; or that he translates them by camouflaging them modestly; or that he invents his own Italian way that is equivalent in liveliness to the dialect; or, finally, that he uses dialect directly - when this is understandable - at least in dialogues: everything is equally permissible. And do you know why I consider so much freedom in the writer to be legitimate? Precisely because I do not consider realism a formal fact, but an ideological fact. When this is set realistically, any formal solution is theoretically good.

Naturally, when analyzing a book, we must do the opposite operation: that is, start from the form, from the style. Which is the only legal operation. So when I say neopurism I don't mean a formal fact at all, but a substantial fact: the elimination from the language of all realistic elements, even in nuce, even marginal, in order to reduce the language to its pure and simple literary function, that is to say function of the servile academicism typical of our average literati.

At this point, a clarification is necessary: which allows me to clarify my thoughts also with respect to an article by Salinari which, in this same newspaper, partly argued with my joking hendecasyllables In the death of

realism. It's clear that in that joke of mine I had to cut things with the cleaver: poetry, even joking, must always be very clear... So the pretext, that is, Calvino's last book, was really a pretext: but I was referring to the entire fabulous trilogy, which Calvino has collected in recent days in a single volume Our ancestors, justifying himself with a splendid introduction, to which I refer, given that there is the explanation why Calvino's fable must also be considered a realistic product, it doesn't make a wrinkle.

As for Cassola, I've been reading him since his first book: and I've always esteemed him not very much, but very much. And so I continue to respect him. I specify here that I was arguing not only with his style - esteem does not preclude polemics - with the ideas expressed in various interventions and critical articles, which were truly strange; and this strangeness is demonstrated by the fact that the «Osservatore Romano», the newspaper «Tempo» (fascist), the magazine «Reporter» (fascist) and even the «Specchio» took up his defense.

As for the other names mentioned in my article: at this moment, I consider a writer whose perspective is Marxist to be a realist: but realism has had infinite historical forms, from that of Dante to that of Verga... In the twentieth century, anti-realistic for excellence, there are twentieth-century forms of realism, which contradict it: first of all the mimetic and Babel-like (I would say physiological) realism of the macaronic Gadda - who bases the entire Pasticciaccio on anti-fascism, in a period in which all his colleagues were academics of 'Italy; then the "critical" realism, according to the definition of Lukács, of Moravia, with his "good and ruthless" diagnoses of contemporary Italian bourgeois society, and of Bassani, with his lyrical but at the same time historically impeccable evocations of pre-war Ferrara and post-war; and finally Morante, who gives a splendid example of what an escapist work of art can be without being evasive, as the author is powerfully heteronomous: her aim is not literature, but an ethical-fantastic ideal , to which literature is subservient, and from which the ideal of immediate social commitment is absorbed, but not erased. Naturally I could have also mentioned other names, Vittorini, Pratolini, Pavese... But then I would have transformed the poem into a telephone directory.

As for the gravity of my complaint, although bitterly joking, it cannot be underestimated: unfortunately, a strong offensive against every literary form of opposition - whether anarchist or radical - can be documented. The

whole literary lower court is in turmoil: and its motto is "Pure language": naturally, at the service of

Christian Democracy, and perhaps even against Fanfani.

n. 30, 23 July 1960

## THE FORT IN THE DESERT

I know that you directed «Officina», an avant-garde magazine, and you directed it with commitment. She edited the review of a little book of poems (Centone), thin to tell the truth, and too little true; I am one of the authors of that distant publication. So, with the introductions done... I'll proceed. I too, dear Pasolini, have followed the same path as him, I follow a theme of values, but my attempts at art, at poetry, polemical or not, are like the battles of Don Quixote. Conformism, non-conformism, conflicting poetics, petty interests, stoup beguinisms, would not harm me, if I could at least take over a fort in the arid desert by which we are too soon buried. What do you think? I await a clarification from you and if possible help from you.

*Henry Corbani*

In the meantime, I thank you for reminding the readers of «Vie Nuove» of the magazine that I edited with Francesco who ensured that, through a series of painful events, the magazine came to an end. However, since those first issues, in addition to having defined the problem terminologically and set it up, we had also tried to delve deeper into it. Schematically: the new commitment consisted in the search for a new critical methodology, in the strictly literary field, and in greater rationality - compared to the sentimental and humanitarian impetus of the Resistance - in the aggression of ideological and historical problems. We were in full development, therefore: and in fact, the new characteristic of the young people, of the new "resisters" - as I noted in the previous issue of "Vie Nuove", speaking of the university conference in Reggio Emilia - consists precisely in a greater critical maturity, in a greater rational detachment, in a greater ideological preparation. Hence, I was saying, my point of pride in remembering, here, «Officina». Leonetti and Roberto Roversi, «Officina». The name of this magazine can be mentioned, at this moment, with a certain opportunity, and - for my part - with a certain pride. It is in fact there that the term "The new commitment" was used for the first time: which was the title of a section of

the magazine in which my work friends and I tried to define what the new type of commitment was, precisely, for a writer and an intellectual, in these years, at the moment in which the historically resistive spirit was waning, and, at the height of Italian involution, new needs were presenting themselves, unpredictable and urgent. Unfortunately, only two issues of the second series of the magazine «Officina» were published, because in the first issue there was an epigram of mine against the politics of the Vatican

Without wanting to, therefore, I am already entering into the merits of your letter. The first "fortress" in the "arid desert" of which you speak - which is the desert of the sensual and intellectual restlessness of youth, of the nihilistic and anarchic temptation of the twenty-year-olds - is the "new commitment". That is, the recovery of the spirit of the Resistance, through an intense cultural re-elaboration. You are young, and you therefore have all the time necessary to invest in this research, in this passion. Read the great texts, the classics, Marx and Engels and Lenin, read history books - the real ones - read the publications, even if they are still chaotic, on the end of fascism and the liberation struggle, read all of this from «Politecnico» to «Officina» which was written on the issue of realism. You will see that, afterwards, the verses will write themselves: and, automatically, you will no longer feel like you are in a desert.

n. 32, 6 August 1960

## THE «VIE NUOVE» RECORD ON THE REGGIO EMILIA MASSACRE

*I purchased the album made by «Vie Nuove» on the events in Reggio Emilia and I assure you that that audio chronicle of such a heinous crime made a profound impression on me. I assume, moreover, that you also listened to it, so I won't describe to you the feelings you experienced during the hearing. What I would like to ask you, however, is what you think of the initiative. I believe this is an absolutely new initiative and I think it would be appropriate to extend and strengthen it. In a country where the records that are sold almost always contain insipid songs, don't you think the "document" - even if it is just naked news - can bring a new breath?*

*Giacinto Malaguzzi - Cremona*

I don't know if for the Reggio Emilia album we can talk about an initiative: or at least about the normative nature of this initiative. It was pure

chance. The director of «Vie Nuove» writes this to me: «I had this tape in Reggio Emilia from a clerk in a fabric shop, who had brought the recorder there to record the rally: and, instead, he ended up recording the 'chilling shootout, not a war, but a cold carnage." Now, I hope that similar carnage will never be repeated again, ever again, in our life, which has been an entire experience of carnage: and I hope that no recorder will ever be used to print records like this again. Which is the most terrible - and also profoundly beautiful - I've ever heard. It seems like a mockery: all the aestheticizing experiments of making poetry with technique, with the randomness of pure matter - from electronic music to abstract painting - now appear to have been rendered ridiculous and painful by this experiment which, while aestheticizing, has nothing at all about it. : born as it truly is by chance, simple reproduction of a "pure matter", sounds, screams, shots, noise. Its aesthetic beauty also has some sublime moments. Because never, not even for an instant, does the aesthetic suggestion detach itself from its content. Therefore, I think that this album will remain one of a kind: any other type of pure and simple, preordained reproduction seems destined to fail. Intellectual or stylistic elaboration of the reproduced fact is always necessary for it to have value. Stylistic critics say that every work has its "figural integration": that is, every work, in the act of being written or read, piece by piece, page by page, word by word, integrates into its own totality immanent to it, in an ideal conclusion that continually gives it meaning and unity. So for this album - it is atrocious to say - the figural integration, which gives it almost an aesthetic dignity, is the death of the young workers of Reggio, is the calculated brutality of the police: facts that we all know, and which therefore integrate within us, with their desperate violence and with their achieved consciousness, the tremendous pre-grammaticalities of the record.

What strikes you above all, listening to this album - beyond emotion, beyond pity - are two facts.

The first is the organized and almost mechanical coldness with which the police fired: shots followed shots, shots followed shots, without anything being able to stop them, like a game, almost with the distracted voluptuousness of fun. This has already been noticed by everyone: and now I understand how one of the dying could have uttered that phrase: "They killed me as if they were shooting at a hunt." Precisely in these days Eichmann is on the scene: he killed like this, with this cold and foreseen

detachment, with this crazy dissociation. It is to be expected that the justifications of the policemen who shot and killed will be completely similar to those already well known, albeit with the necessary differences in atrocity: they too will speak of orders, of duty, etc. And there are also certain documents recently published by «Paese Sera» regarding the Vatican's omissions during the period of racist massacres against the Jews. In all these facts, there is a connection that unites them, an atrocious similarity.

It is true that, at the same time, the popular struggle of Reggio, Genoa, Rome also authorizes us to renew and feel with greater force that hope that seemed lost since the days of the Resistance: but this does not take away from the fact that we must be lucid and ruthless in evaluating the danger. Capitalism has reached in recent days the same degree of power and ferocity that it had reached before the war: and it is more dangerous, because Catholic moralists are less idiots than fascists.

And we are at the second fact that is striking in the Reggio album: that is, the clear sensation that the ones fighting are no longer Italian demonstrators and an Italian police, in a painful but normal, I would say, moment in the process of evolution of the working class: as happened for example again in the massacres after the First World War, in Melissa or Modena. One gets the impression that they now find themselves facing two almost unrelated groups: the population of a city protesting against occupying troops. The policemen who shoot don't even look like Italians, if this category has reason to exist at least as a sentimental fact. There is a leap in quality and nationality between the workers and the police.

At the time of Melissa and Modena, the police had not yet been reorganized: it had been put together somewhat confusedly, it was a section of "reconstruction": it generically defended an order established according to a canon of traditional struggle, which the Resistance had somewhat weakened. Now, however, the Police is perfectly organised, thanks to Scelba and Tambroni: it is a powerful, decisive, politically oriented and conscious body. Furthermore, as a journalist, certainly not a Marxist in the «Europeo», Renzo Trionfera, documents, it is directly linked to the Vatican.

In short, the Italian Police is configured almost like the army of a foreign power, installed in the heart of Italy. How to fight against this power and its army?

For me, I am alien to violence: and I hope, I repeat, that we will never again have to take to the streets to die. We have a powerful means of struggle: the strength of reason, with the coherence and physical and moral resistance that it gives. It is with it that we must fight, without missing a beat, without ever giving up. Our adversaries are, critically and rationally, as weak as they are police-wise strong: they will not be able to lie forever. They will have to respond, sooner or later, to reason with reason, to ideas with ideas, to feeling with feeling. And then they will be silent: their castle of blackmail, violence and lies will collapse: just as the scam law collapsed, just as the Tambroni government collapsed. Italians, on the one hand, are naive and politically immature: but they are naturally intelligent and are slowly realizing which side is right. The new generations of young people demonstrate this.

n. 33, 20 August 1960

I have read in the newspapers these days - and I think you will have read it too - that the construction of a Hilton hotel in Monte Mario in Rome has now entered the executive phase. Is it possible that there is nothing left to do to prevent it? Is it possible that the long struggle supported by the opposition in the Capitol should be frustrated by a blind and obtuse municipal administration? A Hilton hotel in Monte Mario will have the same effect as a petrol kiosk under the Arch of Tito, that is, it will disfigure the entire area. And Cioccetti is not the master of the landscape, but all the Romans. What do you think?

*Antonio Moschetti - Rome*

Do you know that I even wanted to write some verses about this fact? Not really in particular on the construction of the Hilton hotel, because I rarely go to Monte Mario, and, as far as the verses are concerned, what is really needed are optical, plastic, palpable, daily experiences, as you know. What had inspired me to put together a poem were some sacrilegious disembowelments in Trastevere, an area I pass through every day on my way home. Apart from the description, or composition of time and place, typical of the "immediate" inspiration of the poem, what I wanted to express and demonstrate was this: that the true traditionalists are the Marxists.

Put like this, it may sound strange. But think about it for a moment: and, first of all, give the word "traditionalism" its best and highest meaning: the

living, present, and critical sense of history, the love for the products that fix and express it in its significant and unrepeatable moments. There were a bunch of delightful early nineteenth-century houses, next to the enormous baroque arches of Porta Portese. Now these little houses have been destroyed, irremediably erased from the world. I don't know why. In their place now stands an ugly, crooked wall, freshly plastered in a heart-wrenching gray colour. And, then, it may indeed seem strange that a Marxist indulges in these pains. But it's not strange, though. It's right that this is the case. The Italian ruling class, paralyzed by anti-communism, narrow-minded, greedy, corrupt, superficial, cynical, completely caught up in business and speculation, has completely lost any real feeling. Tradition: this is one of the atrocious mystifications with which it covers its work. In reality, the Italian bourgeois don't care about tradition at all: television is enough for them, and the idiotic and saccharine traditionalism that it exalts. And they, the "patriots", the traditionalists, the religious, do nothing but carry out a continuous series of sacrilegious acts against the homeland, tradition and religion.

n. 38, 24 September 1960

Dear Pasolini, only in recent days have I discovered that Roman citizens are "officially" divided into two categories: full citizens and half-service citizens. I am referring to the so-called "non-residents", i.e. those who cannot obtain residence in the municipality of Rome because they do not have a stable job and who cannot have a stable job because they do not have residence. The consequences of this state of affairs are frightening: these people cannot obtain any help, any assistance, they cannot even vote if they do not have the means to return to express their vote in the municipality in which they "officially" reside. In short, for the municipal administration of Rome these people do not exist at all. Faced with the inhabitants of the villages and their miserable living conditions, the Capitoline municipal administration closes its eyes and does not lift a finger. Nice way to solve problems, don't you think? I would like to know what you think about this problem (consequence of the nefarious fascist laws, never repealed, on urban planning) especially since they refer to characters you made the protagonists of your novels. Perhaps, when she wrote them, she didn't realize it, but she was writing about a world that for Cioccetti "doesn't even exist". Sincerely

*Guido Cristini*

Well no: I realized it perfectly: not so much that it didn't exist for the person of Cioccetti - which would be almost nothing -, but for the Italian government, our ruling class, our bourgeoisie, and even part of the men of the left. The latter, I mean, are well aware of the existence of the underclass world on the outskirts of Rome, made up largely of non-residents: but they know it a little from the outside, as a problem to be faced in a general framework. of problems: sometimes bureaucratically, sometimes a little demagogically. In reality, we Marxists struggle a bit to believe in the real existence of an underclass: which is no longer the classic underclass, a pure inert mass: but is in a phase of transformation and evolution.

The problem of non-residents is precisely an element that highlights this new phase of the underclass of the capital (almost all of whom emigrated from the South): in fact - in contact with a new social reality, with new and immediate difficulties - the most passive, inert , resigned sub-proletarians are revived: the desperate spirit of adventure that, from the sad and hungry countries of the South, brought them to Rome, finds here new material in which to exercise its liveliness, its hope.

Very often, it is true, it happens that emigrants from the South, especially young people, allow themselves to be dragged and involved by the most immediate temptations of the environments where they necessarily have to go to live: the miserable neighborhoods, the suburbs, even the shacks.

But this too, all in all, transforms them: in the worst case scenario their naive fatalism turns into an anarchic type of revolt. At least, they no longer consider sacred what actually is not. It's a poor first step.

In the best case scenario - when they keep their fundamental honesty as southern villagers intact - faced with the obvious injustices that oppress them up here, they acquire an albeit confused sense of their own rights. And in fact, in recent months, we have witnessed an organized and collective movement of non-residents, who have thus made their status public, making those with a minimum of human and political conscience take note of it: and some results they have achieved it, or are on the way to obtaining it.

That an Italian citizen can be a non-resident is monstrous. In fact, he has the right to live as he wants and where he wants. Not granting residency means putting intentions on trial: which is typical of paternalistic and fascist governments. But apart from this particular monstrosity of the phenomenon, it is part of a more general and urgent problem: that of unemployment. If unemployment did not exist, the problem of whether or not to grant

residence to a citizen in a new city that he has freely chosen with all his rights would not exist.

By not granting residency, the Roman "authorities" simply and impudently admit this: there is no way to work in Rome. Just as there is no way to work in the miserable southern countries from which most non-residents come. So?

Of course, a concentration camp is always the best solution... And in fact the suburbs, wanted by the fascists, and consecrated by the Christian Democrats, are real concentration camps.

Last night, in a private screening, I saw Visconti's film Rocco and his brothers. The direction, as always, is splendid, the story, especially in the second part, is deeply moving: however, to be completely and perhaps brutally honest, this Visconti's last work leaves me uncertain.

The film deals with the problem of southern emigrants in Milan: I don't know in depth the relationship between southerners and Milan: and on this I leave judgment suspended: but, from direct knowledge, I can say that Rocco and his brothers are southerners of manner of which the only one who has truly guessed is perhaps Ciro - if you take away that little bit of sweetness that is in his relationship with the girl he is going to marry. The others respond to patterns: the conformist easily influenced by bourgeois ideology (Vincenzo), the unbalanced sensualist (Simone) and the mystic (Rocco). They don't break out of these patterns, which, at times, put so much pressure on the character as to make the story a little melodramatic, and often confusing. I would have asked Visconti for greater courage in psychological exploration: what makes things complicated, facts contradictory, events difficult: which is never a spectacle. The psychological in-depth analysis - which, naturally, must then be made concrete, simple, optical, plastic, through the immediate tools of artistic expression - which Visconti also used in The Earth Trembles.

I made this Visconti excursus to say that on the problem of Roman non-residents, i.e. the Roccos and brothers who live in tens, hundreds of thousands in the suburbs, there is no need to be optimistic on a political level in the easy and sentimental sense of the word: Unfortunately, we often have to face contradictions and painful, often insoluble, often atrocious complications. Posing the problem, making it the object of indignation, is not enough: it is a somewhat tautological way to save one's conscience. We must either fight tirelessly, breathlessly, with the utmost dedication, as

many trade unionists do - who are true saints - or analyze the problem with the most courageous and ruthless intention of deepening it and expressing it.

All other systems leave men like Cioccetti and his associates absolutely indifferent.

n. 39, 1 October 1960

I recently saw the film The Long Night of '43 in Ferrara, and I must confess I liked it a lot. Since I belong to the generation that never knew fascism (I was born in 1941) and very few were those who made it known to us, and even cinema did little in that field, I turn to you, who collaborated to the film, to find out if the events narrated in the Long Night of '43 were taken from an episode that actually happened. I am grateful if you would like to answer me, kind regards.

*Marta Roncarati - S. Venanzio di Galliera (Bologna)*

But dear Marta, whoever you ask if what is narrated in the Night of '43 is true or not - as long as they are at least ten years older than you - you will only be able to get an affirmative answer. Ask, let people who are older than you talk to you, your father, your mother, your uncles: maybe even talk to some Jew, who perhaps you remember better... You will see that in talking about those facts that seem so remote to you (like the First World War to me when I was a boy), it will be very easy for you to see tears shining in the eyes of the speaker: because, in reality, those events are close by. It seems like yesterday to me that the moment I learned that my brother, a partisan, had died, and I had to break the news to my mother. Time hasn't erased anything at all, and I still have to grit my teeth to fight back the tears.

I was also recently in Ferrara, to speak publicly about the film Night of '43: and I saw that among the people of Ferrara people still talk about that frightening massacre with the clearest and most shared memory.

Yes: first Giorgio Bassani, author of the story on which the film is based (you can read it in Storie Ferraresi, published by Einaudi: and whose title - will you allow me to boast a little? - I was the one who suggested it to my friend Bassani ), first Bassani, therefore, then the director Vancini - who made the film adaptation of the story - and finally, De Concini and I, screenwriters, documented ourselves directly on the story: both through oral testimonies and through the press and publications of the time.

I remember with great emotion, scattered here, on my table, the yellowed sheets of newspapers, and the poor little editions but so wonderfully full of hope and ideals, published immediately after the war.

I would have liked to use these testimonies to the letter; be faithful to you without any compromise. This was obviously not possible. However, I tried: and in the screenplay you can read a scene - which was not, to my great sorrow, filmed - in which Pino Barilari, from the window, at dawn, looking at the dead on the pavement, says to his wife, he changes the names of some of those shot, recognizing them. This simple enumeration could have been an almost epic, painfully human moment. And then there was a variant of the script, in which I had written a quick dialogue between some women, who Anna was passing by, which gave other "true" circumstances of that night.

I had read the news, precisely in one of those poor little editions that I told you about, entitled 15 November, a small booklet published by the "Comitato Honoranze Caduti per la Libertà" and which perhaps you can still find and read in the Ferrara library.

But then, isn't it enough for you to go along the Castle wall and read the plaque? It doesn't take much imagination to imagine those names becoming people, living people, honest citizens, working people: and to imagine their wives, their children...

All these, however, are nothing more than facts, pure and simple, even if pervaded with emotion. They cannot be enough: I say, they cannot be enough for you, young, and for all those of your generation. Because what you pose to me is a problem that not only affects you, but all of your peers: all those who were born and raised after those events. The problem, seen in this way, becomes enormous and lends itself to a large number of considerations. I give her some at random.

I) In general, the problem of fascism is posed only by children from bourgeois families, let's say students: the children of the working class, workers or even sub-proletarians have an exact notion of it that they do not question, even if it is crude. and elementary. Fascism was an episode of the oppression of the rich over the poor, of the bosses over the workers: a closed episode, which must never be repeated. It was seen in Genoa and Reggio.

For students, or middle class kids, it's different. For them, fascism or that ghost or idea of fascism that they have in their heads can truly be a

temptation, or an alternative.

Prevented, in the family and at school (naturally I am speaking in general), from even thinking about another party, which is not official, governmental, normal, with all the stigmata of clerical consecration, and on the other hand dissatisfied with their world, with their lives, restless, repressed, are looking for a way out: the teddy boys - of the type who recently killed a petrol station attendant in Rome - are nothing but this: and the teddy boys fall into the typology of neo-fascist hooliganism.

II) Nothing has been done in the school to prevent fascist temptations and nostalgia among students. It has been repeated a thousand times, in all democratic newspapers, how, in school textbooks, history ends at the First World War, or if it continues, it continues with an ambiguous "objective" tone.

The first measure to be taken - and it finally seems that a decision has been made - is to update the school textbooks, at least in terms of information. Stop it?

Imagine a history text that is entirely characterized, at worst, by a mythical, foolish and reactionary vision of history, or at best, is maintained in a sort of bain-marie of objectivity: how conceivable, in such a text, a truly anti-fascist appendix?

It is the entire interpretation of history, from the Assyro-Babylonians to today, that must be characterized in a modern, anti-fascist way. Look for example at how the history of the papacy is seen in school textbooks... Let's stay fresh!

In short, it is not enough to have obtained an addition on the facts, on the simple and pure facts, which have occurred in recent decades: the students must be provided with an interpretation, with a key, whereby the atrocious, stupid, shameful action of fascism appears as a corollary, a "how it had to be demonstrated".

III) But does the ruling class really want its children to be anti-fascists? Or aren't there, instead, powerful mental reserves in it, for which reason it wishes that, ultimately, this possibility of alternative or connivance remains for its children? There was a moment this summer when there was really something to be scared of: Tambroni's alliance with the fascists, protected by the police and blessed by the Vatican. If you want to have an idea of what fascism was, think to those days, which she too, albeit indirectly and

immaturely, experienced. Think of the paternalistic and authoritarian air of that government, of the police charges, of the clerical blackmail.

This is a permanent threat in Italian society. And all the hope of a more civilized and free future is placed on you, on the new generation.

n. 40, 8 October 1960

*Dear Pasolini, I'm not very interested in cinema gossip and similar matters, but I confess that the news of Brigitte Bardot's attempted suicide really struck me, especially since the newspapers continue to claim that she really wanted to die. Is it possible that such a girl, who had everything from her life, really wanted to die? What do you think?*

*Sincerely*

*(illegible signature) - Vicenza*

Do you think that Brigitte Bardot "had everything in life"? I don't think so. It is true that I do not know the actress, nor her husband, nor Vadim, nor all the others who are around her: and I have only read, from her latest story, that the titles of her pieces in the newspapers . In fact, just the idea of reading those pieces depressed me deeply: I would never have been able to face them. I know how false the journalistic operation is: it takes isolated, flashy passages from reality, whose meaning is immediately understandable, immediately becomes a kind of formula: and then it stitches them together badly through a moralistic "tone" that is purely and simple reader service. The bourgeois journalist does not think, not even for an instant, about serving the truth: about being in any way honest: that is, personal. He completely depersonalizes himself, to make a hypothetical audience speak for him, which he naturally considers right-thinking but idiotic, normal but ferocious, without a criminal record but cowardly.

Given these beautiful foundations, think what truth we could have learned by reading the newspapers.

However, I lingered for a moment on this fact, not so much to give a reassuring hint of uncertainty to my judgment on Bardot's attempted suicide, but for another reason: that is, to show her what a life mediated entirely through this journalistic report is. , a life all manipulated for the public.

This is what success is: a life mystified by others, which returns mystified to you, and ends up truly transforming you. It is often said of someone who has not been able to handle success: meaning either that he has become

selfish and presumptuous, or that he has not been able to continue to deserve it, working with the same passion, the same authenticity, etc.

In reality, not being able to handle success is something else: that is, giving in to the mystification that it entails. Which is a terrible mystification: or the most frightening indifference, purely worldly; or the most atrocious factionalism, which power perpetrates through the dissemination tools it has in its hands. Little by little, a completely arbitrary atmosphere is created around the "successful" person. His actions, his gestures, his words are healed in a kind of mortal fixity, in which, like a chemical precipitate, the myth of celebrity condenses: which should be what gives meaning to everything, which fills it with itself. every hour of the star or the character: while in reality it does not exist, it is a pure journalistic inference, a business process of the owners of newspapers or production companies, who, with a ferocity worthy of the most ferocious beasts, use a person as an instrument , almost with contempt, with sadistic cynicism.

It is a kind of game, the rules of which are accepted by both sides: on the one hand the exploiters, producers, publishers, directors of bourgeois magazines - on the other the exploited: that is, the person who has had the misfortune of being successful . Inhumane rules. The words respect, gratitude, seriousness, pity make no sense in them. This is certainly one of the most blatantly immoral sides of capitalist society. I, who in a certainly so limited way, compared to B.B., have had some success in recent years, know what this means: and I understand very well the suicidal intentions of that girl. I know what it means to be looked at like rare beasts, to be fed without discrimination to hatred (and much more rarely to sympathy), to be constantly, journalistically booming.

n. 41, 15 October 1960

*Dear Pasolini, when I was at the employment office I came across a group of unemployed people like me. The parties were discussed in view of the elections. I fought for my party, that is, for the PCI, but there were those who said they were voting blank because they no longer had faith in anyone, because everyone only thinks about their wallet. There were also some fascists who claimed that when the "duce" was there in the month of Christmas he forced all the unemployed to work, forcing companies to hire them, perhaps for 40 hours. Now that those who work have 200 hours,*

*couldn't the unemployed be forced to work, perhaps for two weeks? Thus helping a little, perhaps even just the heads of the family; not to waste like the gentlemen do but just so they can buy something. I believe that a measure of this kind could alleviate the hardships of the unemployed a little, without them then begging us for a few kilos of pasta. I beg you, dear Pasolini, for an opinion of him and a response as soon as possible on «Vie Nuove» to be able to show that group of unemployed that there are those who care about them. And, by the way, who will you vote for?*

*Domenico Riccio - Naples*

I am very pleased, dear Riccio, to know that you passionately discuss political things with your friends, with your acquaintances. Unfortunately, in Italy, and especially in cities like Rome and Naples, that famous "fatalism" exists, whereby men tend not only not to act, but also not to discuss. Instead, we must always keep in mind that political discussion gives dignity to man. Let him say it, repeat it in a thousand ways, to his friends, to his acquaintances. Especially when they talk about sports: tell him that when they talk, get excited, shout about sporting events, Lauro is completely happy. He screwed them. But let's get to the question you pose to me: that is, the possibility of obligating employers to hire unemployed workers for some time, perhaps around Christmas... Ah no, dear Riccio! I don't agree with you here. This is called official almsgiving, and the official almsgiving is done by fascists and priests! Of course everyone, privately, if they can do good to another individual, giving them money, offering them a job, has the duty to do so: an intimate duty of theirs, I would say religious. But when almsgiving is no longer a private matter, but a state, official matter, then it becomes a monstrosity: which humiliates the worker who receives that handout, humiliates the employer forced to do so, humiliates the nation in which this happens .

Tell it to your comrades, tell it to your colleagues who, unfortunately, have remained fascists: «We don't want handouts: we fight, we fight, so that there is no longer unemployment in Italy, so that wages are decent, and not for the rich to bestow upon us some humiliating benefit. Let Lauro keep his money, we shouldn't bow down to thank him! The Constitution says that we have the right to work, and not for two weeks a year, but for the whole year. Why is this right not given to us? Why do they try to keep us happy by giving us a piece of bread in alms, seasoned with a bit of sport?".

Tell this to your colleagues. And tell them that political parties are not things that fall from the sky one day, or that arise naturally like roses: political parties are the expression of different social classes: fascism, monarchy, clericalism simply defend the interests of those whom you call "the gentlemen", while socialism and communism defend the interests of the working class: they fight for the implementation of the Constitution, that is, the right to work. You ask me who I vote for: for the PCI: and I don't have the slightest doubt. It is the only party that, together with the socialists, wants and can truly make Italian society a human and civil society. I wouldn't want to say anything else for you. But for your friends who vote blank, I would like to add, through you, that I am so deeply convinced of what I have told you, that I am willing to go against my own private interests, and to accept the most threatening resentment of « gentlemen".

not. 44, November 5, 1960

## A MONUMENT TO D'ANNUNZIO

On 30 October, in Ronchi, the Vittoriale Legion inaugurated a monument to D'Annunzio despite a municipal resolution having rejected the request for land concession. In fact, the Prefect of Gorizia, Dr. Giacinto Nitri, had annulled the municipal decision due to a procedural defect.

*In relation to the initiative, a group of teachers and artists from Isonzo asked for the support and solidarity of an authoritative group of colleagues from Trieste to express a public complaint about the fact, which also constituted due historical clarification, especially for young people and students. We are now asking for your hospitality, well aware of the coherence of your battle for political, intellectual and customs renewal. We think that only with your help will we be able to make the deploration about the untimely and impudent celebration known and disseminated more widely, which therefore deserves to be known throughout Italy precisely to be more deplored. If you deem it appropriate, you can add the warning that memberships are still open as evidence of the existence of a moral protest.*

*Dr. Nereo Battello*

*And here is the declaration of the intellectuals:*

*«The undersigned, faced with the initiative, favored by well-identified political forces, to erect a monument to Gabriele D'Annunzio near Ronchi with intentions of political evaluation clearly emerging from the epigraph*

*that is intended to be affixed to it, point out the historical inappropriateness and contingent on the initiative itself. They do not intend here to express a judgment on the artistic work of the poet and that of the fighter in the war of redemption; but they affirm that the fact that is intended to be exalted in the monument had disastrous consequences, both on the level of the internal life of the Italian people and on that of relations with other peoples.*

*In fact, regardless of the intentions of sincere patriotism of some of the participants, today it is clear - also according to the judgment of the most recent historiography - that D'Annunzio's undertaking represented the first step on the path of violent subversion of the moral and civil custom of freedom transmitted to us by the generations of Risorgimento, as well as the ideological and tactical premise of fascism, and in any case a clear symptom of that spiritual disorder that interrupted the natural development of Italian democracy. On the other hand, the same undertaking, by exasperating local hatreds and nationalistic conflicts, hindered the start of a fair solution to the political problems of the Upper Adriatic.*

*Celebrating this episode today means discrediting the democratic order of the country and carrying out work of political and civil miseducation, particularly towards the younger ones who are held up as exemplary by an irrational gesture of subversion and violence.»*

I lived in Friuli for a long time, my mother is Friulian, I was interested in Friulian history and literature throughout my early youth, many of the signatories of this manifesto are my friends: some, like Giuseppe Zigaina and Biagio Marin, very close friends. I have enough competence, therefore, to know how things are and how things are going on in those places: the "tone" of things. Nationalism, up there - with the potential for fascism - unfortunately arises not only from the usual indifference, but also from the usual cultural sub-existence, but also from a form of moralism, typical of the North: typical of that Catholicism already tinged with Protestantism. And therefore all the more dangerous, because it is closely mixed with profound wrong moral convictions. In short, while it can be said with almost absolute certainty that a central-southern fascist is dishonest, a profiteer, or, at best, someone who gets by by serving, this judgment does not always apply to a northern fascist, and, in this case, Friulian. Often, in their conduct, work, private life, the nationalists or fascists up there are honest and impeccable people. Go and make them understand that a

monument to D'Annunzio the legionary is a monstrous thing! They will never admit it, because, for this, they would have to give up their entire conception of existence.

We must first explain to them that D'Annunzio was a terrible poet, as well as a terrible citizen. I, for example, do not entirely agree with the Friulian and Trieste intellectuals who separated the poet and fighter D'Annunzio from the legionary and pre-fascist D'Annunzio. D'Annunzio is one. His literary importance is only negative, and so is his importance in customs and history. He represents and expresses Italy in its involutionary moment: that is, in the moment in which the Risorgimento showed its limits, its true essence of aristocratic revolt, its apocryphal liberalism (see Gramsci), and the new bourgeois class began to become what it is: a monstrous reserve of selfishness, conformism, fear, mystification, narrow-mindedness, provincialism.

Please note that I am not against D'Annunzio for the same reasons that the Italian intellectuals of the early twentieth century, or of the twentieth century tout court, were against him: who opposed him in the literary superstructures, so to speak. In reality they were D'Annunzios themselves: D'Annunzios in slippers instead of buskins, which is already something, I'm not saying no: but it's almost nothing. In short, they were anti-D'Annunzio just as they were anti-fascists: for reasons of good taste, because both Mussolini and D'Annunzio were "booties". But it is known that such anti-fascism was almost useless: and many anti-fascists of this type were academics in Italy.

D'Annunzio is the typical representative of the eternal servile and evasive Italian classicism, which in him took on forms of provincial decadentism: and, due to his immanent and superficial irrationalism - also typical - often resulted in action: which action it could only be rhetorical and substantially conformist, despite its aspects of sensational non-conformism. Fiume's feat was a narcissistic antics. The poor, honest Friulian nationalists are naive victims.

Since the matter has been resolved, let's say it with all the bitterness of the case, and the monument to D'Annunzio Legionario is there, unshakable (horrible, of course), I would suggest erecting a small, modest monument to I.G. not far away. Ascoli. I have lived for years in Friuli, and also in the professional and philological environment: but I have never felt sincere enthusiasm for this Jew from Gorizia who is certainly the most important

intellectual figure, and the only European one, who has expressed Friuli in our century. He is a man who has carried out work that is monumental and modest, and perhaps questionable in many respects: and certainly not revolutionary. But the silence in which he was kept during fascism - naturally because he was Jewish - and the complicit silence that continues to be kept about him now, certainly deserves recognition that contrasts him, the victim of fascism, with the fascist Legionnaire.

not. 46, November 19, 1960

Dear Pasolini, I believe one of the most notable literary events of recent weeks is the publication - finally - of the Italian translation of Joyce's Ulysses. From a first, hasty reading of this work, I seemed to understand that - albeit in a very mediated form - Joyce made use of the narrative scheme of the Odyssey. Since I have learned from recent literary chronicles that you are preparing La Mortaccia, a novel in which you would take up the narrative structure of Dante's Inferno - although obviously not considering yourself bound by it to express your particular world - I would like to know if there are points of contact between Joyce's procedure and his own. My question is tainted by the doubt of having well understood both the meaning of Ulysses and the information that appeared on Mortaccia in the national press. But in case I am right, I would like to know from you what value you attribute both to the Homeric reminiscences in Joyce and to the Dantesque ones in your work. Thank you in advance for your courtesy. His

*P.S. - However, I would like you to express, even if briefly, an opinion on Joyce's work.*

*Fernando Etnasi, Librarian of the Gramsci Institute - Rome*

Joyce's book, before coming out in Italian and becoming a current literary event - as we hope it will become in these days - had a very long incubation at the level of the most aristocratic literature. Ever since I was a boy, Joyce was a kind of model and myth: perhaps the greatest after Proust: certainly to be far surpassed not only by Mann, but by the great American authors discovered, at least in Italy, between the two wars. .

In Italy Joyce had, and has, his great equivalent in Carlo Emilio Gadda, who is not necessarily inferior to him in concrete terms. The "inner monologue" - the incessant thought of the character, or characters, through which the environment, and ultimately the world, is seen - while in Proust it

was the direct object of the story, and was therefore in its own way objective, in Joyce - and in Gadda - by becoming mimetic, it produces a grandiose linguistic upheaval. Apparently it is therefore more subjective - in the current sense of this word - but in reality, since it involves characters who are not the "I who tells" as in Proust, it is more objective, at least in that it requires the author not to "monologue » alone but takes charge of reporting - camouflaging it psychologically, linguistically and therefore also socially - the monologue of a human being who lives his own individually and historically autonomous life.

A few more steps - perhaps many steps - and you ideally arrive at the rustic, rudimentary and dialectal interior monologue of the Verga fishermen.

I therefore believe in the enormous importance of Joyce: it in fact indicates the path to a type of objectivity that cannot be the nineteenth-century, positivistic, scientific one, and requiring a sort of undisputed trust in the objective reality, admitted by all, of human life. It was said in the nineteenth century: "He did, he went", declaring themselves, as authors, authorized chroniclers of indubitable facts. But then there was the crisis of the bourgeoisie and its literary ideology - which gave such a guarantee of positivistic objectivity - was shattered: idealism, relativism, Bergsonism, decadentism undermined its beautiful nineteenth-century security: and it was not could no longer be said "he did, he went". Objectivity was then sought within the "I" (Proust, and all the poets of the great European decadentism), as the only guarantor of real and experienced existence. Joyce attempted something else: that is, he entered not into his own "I", but into the "I" of another man, different from him psychologically and socially: that is, he neither said "he did, he went", nor " I did, I went": but something in between: camouflage, the reconstruction in the laboratory of the current of thoughts of another human being studied in his personal reality.

I'm ashamed to talk about myself at this point: but it's clear that we're not talking about value judgments here, but about literary modes. With Ragazzi di vita and A violent life - which many idiots believe to be the result of superficial documentaryism - I took the line of Verga, Joyce and Gadda: and this cost me a tremendous linguistic effort: nothing but documentary immediacy! Reproducing, mimicking the "inner language" of a person is atrociously difficult, increased by the fact that, in my case - as often in Gadda's case - my person spoke and thought in dialect. It was necessary to

go down to his linguistic level, directly using dialect in direct speech, and using a difficult linguistic contamination in indirect speech: that is, in the entire narrative part, since the world is always "as seen by the character". The discordances in this operation are always a hair's breadth away from the writing: it is enough to exceed just a minimum towards both the language and the dialect that the difficult amalgam breaks down, and goodbye style.

In La Mortaccia, my new book, I will use the same linguistic procedure: but with some obvious extensions. In fact, the prostitute Teresa descends into hell, according to Dante's vision and scheme: and hell is always "as seen by her": there will therefore be a fusion between her language - the Roman dialect of the underworld - and mine of speaker - literary Italian. But since in hell you will meet characters of all kinds - from Christian Democratic ministers to Stalin, from thieves and pimps to Moravia, from Neapolitans to Milanese - it is clear that, in the particular stories of these characters, I will have to adopt different linguistic contaminations.

My work will be comic and satirical: the scheme of Dante's Inferno is a comic element: and is therefore explicit and declared: no more and no less than what would happen in a variety show.

The Odyssey, however, in Joyce's Ulysses, is a mystical-psychological-mythical reference, absolutely literary: an element of pastiche, of refined and ambiguous remake. It is clear that this taste for pastiche and "literary remake" will also remain in La Mortaccia, but it will be a secondary element, an added stylistic value, so to speak, a stimulant, a drug.

What interests me above all is using Dante's Inferno to give a historically objective judgment and a Marxistically exact diagnosis of our society.

n. 48, 3 December 1960

# 1961

## PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT IN RUSSIA

*Dear Pasolini, why has the Russia that gave the world Dostoevsky and Pushkin, Tolstoi and Chekhov, Gogol and Lermontov, Gorky and Sholochov, Mayakovsky, Blok and Yesenin never given birth to a philosopher of the stature of Kant, Hegel and Marx? Even if cultural development was particularly slow there, why can't Russia figure in the history of speculative thought on the same level as Germany, England or ancient Greece?*

*Paolo Petti - Nocera Inferiore*

Have you noticed that in Russia there are not even painters who are truly worthy of comparison with the great Western painters? This is a curious fact. It is quite inexplicable, for those who absolutely do not believe in racial determinism. Some ethnologist should carry out investigations, comparisons between the various peoples "denied" from painting, etc.

Due to the lack of great philosophers, or thinkers perhaps, the answer is easier: first of all because there is an exception that destroys the rule: Lenin. Think for a moment about Russian history up to the nineteenth century, about the Middle Ages that dominated there, without the pre-Christian or patristic traditions of the West. It is almost impossible, in such conditions, to imagine the appearance of a philosopher or a thinker. Which are not monsters or miracles: but cultural phenomena that do not exist if there is no culture. The nineteenth century marks the first moment of contact between Russia and the West: the progressive collapse of its persistent Asian Middle Ages. And then the energy compressed for centuries explodes: and we have one of the most beautiful literatures in human history. It is natural that literature - that is, "hot", pragmatic, concrete, living thought - preceded philosophy - that is, "cold", pure, abstract, reflected thought. Then in Russia there was the first great cultural movement in its history: that is, revolutionary thought, and Lenin. It doesn't seem like much to me.

n. 2, 14 January 1961

## THE CENSOR AND «L'ARIALDA»

Dear Pasolini, allow me to ask you for your opinion on a fact which seems to me to be defined as a worrying manifestation even by those who

are not usually surprised by the signs of the times. I am referring to the "tribulations" of Arialda. After the interventions of magistrates Trombi and Spagnuolo, in Rome where the influence of the Vatican is believed to be more sensitive than elsewhere also for reasons of distance, Testori-Visconti's work was performed for about fifty evenings.

In Milan, however - an "advanced", industrial, "modern", "European" center - Arialda is not available because Dr. Trombi, supreme moderator of a misunderstood protection of morality, opposes it with a stubbornness truly worthy of a better cause . This Dr. Trombi, it seems to me, can be compared to His Majesty's censor against whom G.B. Shaw lashed out at the ban on the performance of "unpleasant comedies." Perhaps the judgment is a bit benevolent: in fact, many years have passed since that time and, what's more, many events. Greetings.

*Pietro De Toni - Rome*

I have already had the opportunity on other occasions - by replying to other letters - to talk about the "Trombi case". But naturally the considerations to which this lends itself are infinite: it is a matter, if nothing else, of keeping up to date on its developments... At the moment it's Arialda's turn. I'm not enthusiastic about this Testori comedy: in fact, to be honest, I like it very little. I must say, however, that I consider Testori's work as a whole to be at a good level: and at least one story by him, Il Dio di Roserio, seems to me to be one of the best of twentieth-century fiction.

I remember being enthusiastic about it when it first came out a few years ago: and, with Bassani, I even made a film out of it (a project that never came to fruition). The Arialda exaggerates some typical elements of Testori's narrative: a certain aristocratic indifference, which delights in popular themes, but seen in an anarchic and disheveled way: a kind of regret for popular "health", even when the people are commonplace, and his life coincides with the underworld. This "health" is seen first of all as common sense, then as a petty-bourgeois aspiration, which, upon returning, becomes bitterness, anger, anarchy.

The way in which Testori looks at the Milanese "populace" does not coincide with an ideology, but with a feeling: there is no sociological research in him unless mediated by an irrational sympathy. Testori's background remains fundamentally Catholic: even if in his case it is, so to speak, an "atheist Catholicism".

With these tools of knowledge and expression, L'Arialda could only succeed as an old lyrical tranche de vie, blocked in mimetic and precious styles. Naturally, what is said there is all true: and the lyricism that animates this reality of popular, old Milan, grappling with neo-capitalist temptations, is often sincere. But the limit of the work is in its ideological narrowness. It fits perfectly into that new movement in Italian culture that I, speaking of Fellini's dolce vita, presented under the label of "neo-decadentism".

Just as, for example, Antonioni's La notte is included. The only reason that justifies the criticism of a society made from within the society itself is a perfect stylistic success: something that cannot be said for either L'Arialda or La notte: both stylistically limited by a certain somewhat formalism provincial and devoid of internal vitality, of violence (which happens instead in Godard's Breathless, for example).

Seizing L'Arialda is monstrous. For particular reasons and for general reasons. In particular, Testori is an absolutely respectable writer, one of the best working in Italy at the moment. One absolutely cannot ignore the quality of the art on his page, even if the art is not always found there. On the other hand, it is criminal to put a writer in front of this dilemma: either you are a poet or you are a pornographer.

A writer must also be able to risk non-poetry. Even the greatest poets have passages, pages, entire books that are not poetry. What matters, I repeat, is the quality of the page. And you can't get confused. There is a page that is by a writer and a page that is not. Now all of L'Arialda is written by one writer: there is not the slightest doubt about this. Wanting to talk only about Poetry with a capital P is blackmail.

But then there is a theory of Mr Trombi which would also tend to overcome the last obstacle: poetic success. By identifying the fact or event of poetry with that of reality, Mr. Trombi abolishes a boundary without which all poets - and I mean all - would be indictable. Naturally, then, for Mr Trombi the discrimination would only be of content.

He, for example, declared in an interview - I read it in the "Messeggero" - that he does not consider my novels to be confiscable because in them there would be an aspiration for a better life, for moral light. Naturally, I can only thank him for having noticed something that all the bad faith bigots plaguing Italy didn't want to notice.

Furthermore, I have always underlined, even in my previous polemics, that Mr Trombi seems to me to be acting in good faith. But he is not a good

critic (apart from the fact that he is an absolutely biased theorist): if he were a good critic he would realize that it is the "quality" of the page that makes the "morality" of the page: and while the contents or allusions to the contents are readable to the letter, to grasp the quality you need to have specific expertise. And the code contemplates precisely this fact. Before seizing a work it is necessary, if ever, to hold a public trial: and those who testify must be competent people.

If Testori's work were fairly discussed - even in a trial, perhaps: since the legal line could be this: and this is what happened to my novel Ragazzi di vita - many surprises would probably await Mr. Trombi: not least for example , the fact that L'Arialda, examined at its proper level, and not at the miserable level of the magazines, would appear to be a typical product - albeit conflicted, uncertain, and in some cases overturned - of the moralism and Catholic desperation that are typical of the highest Lombard tradition.

n. 10, 11 March 1961

## MORAVIA AND ANTONIONI

*Dear Pasolini, I follow your column carefully and I agree with its approach. I would like to ask you, given that many literary and artistic works in general are dictated by the so-called "solitude" of modern man or, more precisely, by the anti-human condition of man in today's society, the justification of these works, their validity and their importance and function. And the cultural reasons for this attitude. Best regards.*

*Giovanni Stefani - via S. Egidio 3, Florence*

Your note, dear Stefani, is an invitation to write a book. In fact, you speak of "literary and artistic works" produced in this last period: and if I were to respond in kind, and with the analytical anger that is characteristic of me, I would have to write an entire chapter on the history of culture. But I want to take your request as a solicitation and deal with current topics: the latest "literary and artistic works" to which you refer are probably Antonioni's films and La noia di Moravia.

Both The Night and Boredom express, as you say, the "solitude" of modern man, or "more precisely the anti-human condition of man in today's society". Yet there is a substantial difference between the two works.

Meanwhile, The Night is written by the author, Antonioni, directly: Moreau is "she" and Mastroianni is "he": despite this narrative objectivity,

the work is extremely subjective and lyrical. The two characters "she" and "he" are nothing but flatus vocis, charged with expressing that vague, irrational and almost inexpressible state of anguish which is typical of the author, and which in the characters almost becomes a reflected or reported feeling.

In La noia the opposite happens: it is written by the author indirectly: Dino, the protagonist, is the "I" himself who tells the story: yet, despite this narrative subjectivity, the work is extremely objective, conscious. The character "I" is nothing but an expedient, used to express a very clear, historicized, rational state of anguish in the author, and restored to his vagueness, which is then poetic concreteness, in the character. Both works express the anguish of the modern bourgeois: but through two very different poetic methodologies, so to speak, which reveal a substantial difference in ideological structure.

For Antonioni, the world in which facts and feelings like those in his film occur is a fixed world, an unchangeable, absolute system, with something even sacred. Anguish acts without knowing itself: as happens in all natural worlds: the bee does not know that it is a bee, the rose does not know that it is a rose, the savage does not know that it is savage.

That of the bee, the rose, the wild are worlds outside of history, eternal in themselves, without prospects except in sensible depth.

Thus Antonioni's characters do not know that they are anguished characters, they have not asked themselves, except through pure sensitivity, the problem of anguish: they suffer from an illness that they do not know what it is. They just suffer. She goes around neurotically peeling walls, he goes carrying his mortified face around streets and living rooms, without beginning or end. Moreover, Antonioni does not make us understand, or suppose, or intuit in any way that he is different from his characters: just as his characters limit themselves to suffering anguish without knowing what it is, so Antonioni limits himself to describing anguish without knowing what it is.

Moravia, on the other hand, knows this very well: and so does his character, Dino, who lives and operates at a cultural level only one step lower than that of Moravia. Throughout the novel, therefore, we do nothing but discuss, analyze, define anguish (in the novel called "boredom"). It derives from a complex born in the rich bourgeois boy: which complex involves a depressing impossibility of normal relationships with the world:

neurosis, anguish. The only way to escape is to abandon oneself to eros: but even eros turns out to be nothing more than mechanism and obsession. This is what the character knows. Moravia, of course, knows more. He knows that psychology is not just psychology: but also sociology. He knows that if that "complex" which was mentioned is a strictly personal fact, it is also a social fact, deriving from an incorrect relationship between social classes, from an incorrect relationship, that is, between rich and poor, between intellectual and worker, between refined and uncultured, between moralist and simple. In other words, Moravia knows Marx, his protagonist does not. This is why the protagonist's much discussion about his evil is a bit empty and has a purely mimetic and lyrical value. The solution is missing that word that Moravia knows and his protagonist does not. Boredom is a splendid novel, whose last page should have been a tragedy, and not a suspension. Moravia had to have the strength not to give any kind of hope to its protagonist: because the protagonist's illness is an incurable disease. There are no third forces, nor ideals of humanistic syncretism capable of freeing him.

Unfortunately, the average bourgeois public, and also many intellectuals (despite laughing at certain clumsy jokes in the film) recognize themselves more in The Night than in La Boredom: apart from the hypocrisy, for which they would never want to be caught up in the erotic madness of in which the Moravian protagonist is taken, they feel that the "pure-anguish" characters of the Night better reflect their substantial desire not to face rational problems, their refusal to any form of criticism, and the intimate satisfaction of living in a world anguished, yes, but saved, in their eyes, by the refinement of anguish.

n. 11, 16 March 1961

## A FILM ABOUT RESISTANCE

*Dear Pasolini, I am a 25 year old worker. I follow with interest her "dialogues" which teach me to appreciate the contribution she makes to the diffusion of culture. Undoubtedly, Italian cinema, defying the most ferocious censors, has greatly helped the people to understand the substance of fascism. Do you believe that at the present moment it is possible, knowing full well the censorship that exists in our country, to make a film on the partisan guerrilla war, highlighting the values and self-sacrifice of those men who fought for freedom, highlighting the most salient phases of the*

*struggle that ended with the insurrection in which all the people participated? Best regards.*

*Edoardo Platania - Turin*

If the protagonist were a priest, perhaps yes. Joke. I remind you, however, that films have already been made about the partisan guerrilla war: Lizzani, for example, made two: Achtung banditi and Il Gobbo. Many directors have also recently produced good works on the Resistance: Rossellini, for example, who found in General della Rovere part of his ancient, stupendous inspiration to which Roma Città Aperta and Paisa are due. Then you remember the anti-fascist The Long Night of '43. But a real work that aims to have the partisan revolt as its object, and to be, so to speak, its aedic or tragic song, has not yet occurred.

Official Italy evidently doesn't want it. You saw what happened with a harmless and basically ordinary television program entitled Look, it's not the fault of the directors or the authors: I'm sure that Visconti or Antonioni, Rossi or Vancini would like to make a film about the Resistance, without half terms, in which the Resistance was the only, true, entire topic of the work. But you can't expect an artist to dry up wanting to do work that can't be done. Neither our men in government, nor the censorship, nor the Bishops, nor certain magistrates, nor, finally, . After all, in Tempo di musica? a fortiori the producers would like a film about the Resistance set from the point of view of the Resistance: that is, devoid of any form of indifference. What official Italy fears above all, as the greatest, the only sin, is faith. He who believes is a reprobate. So you will see that sooner or later, the hero of national indifference, cynicism, disbelief, aridity, Alberto Sordi, sooner or later, will appear in the guise of a partisan. Everyone go home, he has already started shooting at the Germans. But with the priest's blessing. As if the Resistance had only been a fight for national independence! No: just as the Risorgimento united Independence and Constitutional Freedom into an indivisible whole, so the Resistance united Independence and Social Justice into an indivisible whole. The fight was against the invading Germans and the reactionary fascists together. But you know that the fascists, poor victims, cannot be touched: they protest, they blackmail, they appeal to great feelings... (Love of the Fatherland: a good excuse for not loving your neighbor). They are taboo. The idiotic Italy of the parishes ultimately still and eternally sees them as voluntary mercenaries in the fight against communism. Under these conditions, what film would you like to

make about the Resistance? Or an adventure film, or an optimistic film, to end with a general spaghetti dinner.

I write to you jokingly. But what I outline so briefly is a very serious situation. I don't know how it will end. The last act of the reaction, the letter from the cardinals against the freedom of expression of film directors, pushes us back into the midst of the Counter-Reformation. Furthermore, it is illegal, because it interferes in the affairs of a State that is not the Vatican State: of a State where a citizen has the full right to know for himself what is good and what is bad. I don't see why the Italian cardinals, who are Catholic - and that is, etymologically, universal, non-national - deal as authorities with the cinematography of a State of which they are simple citizens. They are addressing bodies of the Italian State, not their parish priests or their faithful. And this is the first step towards the suppression of freedom. Freedom of expression and speech is always the first to be taken away: because only if it has been taken away can the other freedoms be taken away. I am afraid that Italian workers have not well understood this direct relationship between their freedom and the freedom of artists. If they had understood this, they would have done what they did this July, they would have taken to the streets.

The monopoly and the church want to do precisely what the July riots prevented them from doing. With force (i.e. with Tambroni's attempt) they did not succeed: and so they return to their traditional tactics: and get around the obstacle. Once the intellectuals have been humiliated and silenced, they will be able to organize MSI Congresses in Genoa. And the Genoese won't be able to do anything else.

I went very far with the response to your letter: but unfortunately some tremendously logical connections led me to this series of painful deductions. I have already written it other times in these letters of mine from «Vie Nuove»: you, who are a young worker, should try to fully understand the things, elementary after all, that

I mean it when I propose greater unity of struggle between intellectuals and workers. Italy will be a humane and civilized country only on the day when intellectuals participate in workers' strikes and demonstrations, and workers protest to defend the freedom of expression and speech of intellectuals. There was only a feeble protest against the cardinals' terrible letter: now we are starting to adapt to the climate of reaction. What do you young workers do? Should I resign myself to thinking that the dead of

Reggio or Palermo have already included among the number of forgotten martyrs?

n. 13, 1 April 1961

## THE REASONS FOR PIETY

*Dear sir, on this day of such joy and emotion for the heart of every Christian, I cannot help but let you know all the bitterness, all the pain and initially the indignation that one of your writings aroused in my soul.*

*I'm not educated, I'm not a member of any association. I am a simple woman, who lives her life of work, of worries, of suffering; she is always serene because she, a great faith, she gives strength to my soul and tells me that our life does not end with the death of the body.*

A few months ago, the greengrocer wrapped some vegetables for me in a newspaper page. I never read anything, because I don't have the time, but that day, I laid my eyes on the last lines of one of his poems: «Let them come among us, who have only the hope of a desperate struggle left, there is nothing it is more light than Christmas or Easter. You are now the light of the true Italy."

*Maybe I didn't interpret her verses well (and I wish it were that way) because the pain she causes me is so great. I have a 22 year old son and I think how great my pain would be if he had the same feelings as him.*

Just today I repeated to myself: Manzoni's Christmas and The Resurrection, poems I studied when I was almost a child. I cried with joy and emotion, thanking the Lord, because there are still so many people who feel the full power of the Christmas and Easter light!

*Fernanda Meoni Gelli - viale Monte Grappa 174, Prato (Florence)*

Everyone has their own light, and, since this light is irrational, indistinct, mystical, without limits, that is, psychological and historical, everyone tends to give this light a form. For her, the form of her light are Christmas and Easter, as Christian holidays: for me they are no longer. I have much more time than her to think about these things: in fact, thinking about these things is my job. As a boy I too read, and of all the other humble dead who fought for a truer religious relationship between men. Christmas and Easter were ancient pagan religious holidays (the birth of the sun and the advent of spring) full of crude, mythical religious spirit: they were then transfused into Christian holidays, bringing their ancient naivety into the new one

taught by Christ. But after the Counter-Reformation, and in the current historical moment, there is nothing more prosaic, hypocritical, conformist than the spirit imparted by the clergy to similar occasions of love. Manzoni's Christmas and The Resurrection: but then I thought about it and rethought. If I reread them I no longer find them the same as then. I am not what Proust calls an intermittence de coeur. Manzoni's Catholicism is a much more complex and profound historical fact than you naively believe: it was, it is not. Everything moves with the movement of history. There are no immobile things: not even poems are immobile, they seem to superbly place themselves beyond time... For Manzoni, Catholicism was an ideology which, in its particular historical moment, in its particular psychology, was an element of balance: and, in its liberal component, it was also progressive. Now, those who teach in school to love Manzoni's Catholicism and Catholicism tout court are in no way enlightened: they are reactionaries. The light that they offer to their faithful in the form of a religious rite (Christmas, Easter, etc.) is a light that serves to blind. There is no longer a single spark of the spirit of Christ in the Christmases of the panettone operation and in the Easters of the dove operation. Monopoly and the Church are closely united. Every religious spirit cannot help but feel deeply offended by it. And therefore do not look elsewhere for its light. For me there is nothing more similar to the evangelical spirit of the dead in July

Here I write them in a very basic way: the problem is infinitely more complex. But I want to be understood in a basic way. If you then want to know my innermost reasons, you should read my book of verses which must be published by the spring, and which is entitled The Religion of My Time: given that my personal case interests you with such pity. But in the meantime, examine and observe carefully this pity of yours; perhaps, with a little courage, you will be able to glimpse how much cowardice, how much laziness and how much narcissism it contains: or at least how much rhetoric.

n. 15, April 15, 1961

## THE MONSTROSITIES OF CENSORSHIP

I don't understand why «Vie Nuove» is so insistent against censorship. I am married and have two children, aged 11 and 5. I don't want them to see dirty things in the cinema. It seems to me that censorship is trying to stem rampant corruption. In n. 9, in the film criticism column, it is said that we

must look beyond appearances and all of Dominique's "filth" is justified (film, The Truth). Don't you think there is corruption in that girl? How would you behave with her daughter if she led such a wild life? That article, frankly, seems to me to be an incitement to evil.

*Maria Grazia Errani - Faenza (Ravenna)*

I haven't seen the film that tells what you call Dominique's "filth". But I wouldn't worry about it. What's wrong with making love? She doesn't seem to worry so much about the possible loves of her son: why does she worry so much about the possible loves of her daughter? Don't you think it's time to stop this racial discrimination between the sexes? She knows very well that her son, when he is a young man, will make love with many women, if he likes it: and she, unconsciously, sees nothing wrong with this, indeed, deep down, she is proud of it. But what if her daughter also had a very sensual and passionate nature? Would you like to repress it, compress it, torment it, persecute it? You know, corruption is a very relative thing: it is a social fact, not a moral one. If a society considers women to be slaves, virgins by force, it is clear that it will then consider women who violate the rules of the game to be corrupt. A Hindu is corrupt if he eats meat. Not her. Sensuality for sensuality is not an evil: it actually belongs to pure things, which it is even foolish to call "filth". Anyone who calls them this is a repressed person, who condemns what he cannot do, due to hypocrisy or misunderstood morality. It is of course, in good faith. It is up to you to make your daughter understand that society condemns certain things, and that if she does them, she does them at her own risk and peril: and that in any case, as in all natural appetites, moderation and willpower are needed, because such appetites do not degenerate: and, above all, do not harm anyone else. It is not the outburst of the senses that should be feared, but the sentimental complications that can arise from it, in a society like ours: and in any society, as long as sexual life remains dissociated from the rest of life. By appealing to censorship, she carries out a typical act. That is, you demonstrate that, in your perfect good faith, you actually want to "repress", that is, carry out an act that is morally illicit and clinically ineffective, indeed, dangerous. She doesn't repress herself, she educates herself. Censorship is a monstrous act of ineducation, because it uses force, not persuasion, coercion, not collaboration. You have children, so you should have understood how stupid it is to use force and coercion with them instead of persuasion and collaboration. It is clear, however, that a crime

must be punished. But there is a penal code for this. I'll give you a family example... You must say to a young child: "My child, don't steal the jam, because it's a bad action, and then it can hurt you, etc.": having said this, with due love, she will It's good to leave the cupboard open if you want the esteem between you and your son to be mutual. If then, once, the child, despite the work of loving conviction, collaboration, and despite the trust placed in him, stole the sugar, he should certainly be punished. Here is established the difference between censorship - which is a monstrous thing - and justice, which is a human thing.

n. 17, 29 April 1961

## CATHOLIC QUALIFICISM

*Dear Pasolini, why do you speak so badly of Carducci? perhaps because you are the new D'Annunzio? I don't know if you will answer this question, but if you asked it on «Vie Nuove» you would demonstrate admirable courage.*

*With best regards*

*Stefano Grillini via Montecuccoli 7, Budrio (Bologna)*

If my courage, dear sir, consisted in taking your letter into consideration and replying to it, I certainly could not be very proud of it, nor would I care to demonstrate it. I answer you, meanwhile, to clarify a circumstance: in these same columns I also "said badly" about D'Annunzio, and with much more violence than I did about Carducci: his naive insinuation therefore has no reason to exist. The reality is that every formation is tremendously complex: and here coexist - among the various and contradictory elements that come together in the magma of my literary production - both a certain civic lyricism of Carducci and a certain stylistic emphasis of D'Annunzio. I know. But I also know that these Carduccian and D'Annunzio survivals are purely stylistic and psychological: and, apart from the fact that their contingent is very insignificant, they are nothing more than a skin accident, so to speak: they belong to the indistinct and irrational background of every system linguistic. Unfortunately I have a very Italian cultural background. But I hate Carducci and D'Annunzio for the ideological world that they express: an ideological world whose pettiness, hypocrisy and presumption still oppress us. It is the ideological world of our bourgeoisie. Carducci tried to sing of its ancient origins, romantically understood, and its closest ones -

namely the French Revolution -, but always in an approximate and celebratory way, fundamentally insincere. Let's not talk about D'Annunzio: his mythical idea of history and his aestheticizing notion of man are two essential components of the ridiculous and sinister fascist ideology.

But I also reply to you for another reason: because your letter gave me one of the typical, and very frequent, sorrows by which my day is obsessed: that is, it was yet another verification of an irremediable state of fact: the cynical indifference produced by corrupt Catholicism. Maybe these are big words, regarding her. But please reread your note and analyze it. It consists, let's say, in the following three paragraphs: 1) «Why do you speak so badly of Carducci?» 2) «Perhaps because you are the new D'Annunzio?» 3) «I don't know if you will answer this question etc.».

Well: the first paragraph translates into an act of immediate practicality an act that was instead of completely disinterested critical mediation. That is, you reduce what was intended to be a simple but serious ideological observation to a malignant and allusive salon discussion. You have therefore, in the meantime, and in the first instance, lowered everything to a lower level. If this isn't cynicism I don't know what else to call it.

The second paragraph accentuates the presumption of bad faith that the first already expressed: that is, I would argue with Carducci because I would be interested in doing so as a neo-D'Annunzio. Apart from the fact that all this is ridiculous, this undaunted presumption of bad faith and pettiness reveals a pessimistic conception of the world that is frightening. Typical of counter-reformist Catholicism. And, of Catholic degeneration, there is also the approximation, the contempt for information and accuracy: that is, you have heard that I am a D'Annunzio because of the vague and ferocious insinuations of the bourgeois press which knows no obstacle even to discredit me: you either didn't research my texts at all, or you stripped yourself of any critical independence and accepted the most basely conformist interpretation of me.

The third paragraph shows that you think that in our society the common and mandatory behavior is the fear of scandal, hypocrisy and prudent silence. Otherwise it wouldn't even occur to you that it takes courage to answer questions like yours.

In the end she sends me her best regards: and I accept them and reciprocate them. I'm not as horribly pessimistic as you. And I want to give

you every benefit of good faith, and, above all, of good will for the future, since, as I suppose, you are a young man.

n. 20, May 20, 1961

## PERSONAL NOTE

A Christian Democratic newspaper in Rome «La discussion» reports, by an anonymous author, my response to a reader of «Vie Nuove» regarding the sexual problem of women in Italy. He reports it as if it were something ignominious: while I was simply saying that it was time to put an end to racist discrimination between males and females, and that women have the right to no longer be considered a "sexual handicap": after all, the reader of «Vie Nuove» you can reread those lines of mine in the n. 17 of the magazine.

«Discussion» concludes: «We believe that the director of “Vie Nuove” has committed not only a morally unspeakable action, but also a big political mistake in publishing this response from Pasolini. It is difficult to imagine, in fact, a father and a mother who, however communist, materialistic, or atheist, could remain indifferent to the possibility of their daughter behaving according to absolute and unbridled sexual freedom." But I wouldn't remain indifferent to such a hypothesis either, dear scandalized editors of «Discussione»! In fact, I have never spoken of "absolute and unbridled sexual freedom". I only talked about freedom. It would be like when you speak with such emotion about political "freedom", I were to say that you speak of "absolute and unbridled political freedom"! You would be sorry, wouldn't you, if I misunderstood you in this way? So why do you do it with me? Would this be Catholic "behavior"?

Another newspaper, this time the provincial «Vita Nuova» of Trieste, attacks me for another response: the one in which I confessed my total lack of emotion in the face of holidays like Christmas or Easter, which have now become the holidays of pure conformism, comforted by the illusory wave of neo-capitalist well-being. The Trieste newspaper calls me a "pornographer" and mentions my suspended accounts with the Justice. Someone will perhaps remember an event in which I was involved as a peacemaker: I separated two litigants, a man and a woman, and, to avoid the worst (since the whole alley where I happened to end up was in turmoil) I brought away the young man in my car, and then bring him back there half an hour later.

All the bourgeois newspapers spoke of "aiding a robber and a thief". However, it turned out that the young man didn't steal anything at all.

The crime for which I am therefore accused is now "aiding and abetting a fight": this is what is called, in my case, the work of peacemaker between two litigants. I have a lot of faith in the judiciary, and therefore my pending accounts with the justice system are much less serious than those that the cronies of «Vita Nuova» would have if I sued them for calling me a pornographer. I don't sue them because as long as I can ignore the insults, I ignore them, when I can't ignore them, I believe more in the power of reason than in the intervention of a policeman.

n. 21, 27 May 1961

## ACCATTONE AND TOMMASINO

*Mr. Pasolini,... between the two positions of the characters there exists, in my opinion, a substantial difference, since in Tommasino the "arrival point" means struggle, vitality, real or presumed ability to face the contradictions of society, while in Accattone , the dynamic theme, understood as the possibility of dialectically opposing society itself, ceases due to its desired disappearance, of a dialectical element, that is, which would have been necessary for a struggle which is reality itself. I believe I see in this epilogue a renunciation of reaction and a prevalence of social and economic forces that crush the individual, since Accattone's death represents the "highest point of arrival". How can Tommasino's vitality, conceived as the possibility of undertaking a social struggle, be connected with Accattone's "forced" renunciation of the same? I ask you these questions because I haven't seen his film yet. I took the quotes from «Cinema Nuovo» n. 150.*

*Marcello Romano - Terni*

Just yesterday I went to choose the place to shoot the last shots of Accattone. Outside Rome, towards the mountains and valleys of southern Lazio, and, precisely, between Subiaco and Olevano: but it was above all Olevano that I was aiming for, as a place painted by Corot. I remembered its light and nuanced mountains, framed like many squares of sublime, airy gauze against a sky of the same color as them. I had to choose a valley which, in Accattone's dream towards the end of the film, shortly before his death, represented a rough and substantial paradise. In short, Accattone not

only dies, but he goes to heaven. You will say: but this is the last straw! Not only after the "conversion" of Tommasino, P.P.P. gives us a film in which there are no conversions (from the sub-proletarian state to the proletarian state and class struggle), but even a film in which the "figural integration" of the traditional and Catholic state par excellence is endorsed. And she wouldn't be wrong to be shocked if that were exactly the case.

In reality, Accattone's "crisis" is a totally individual crisis: it takes place not only in the context of his unreflected and unconscious personality, but in the context of his unreflected and unconscious social condition. If by chance I had not had the idea of talking about this crisis, it would have gone unknown to itself and to others like a meteorological phenomenon in some desert area, like a landslide in the heart of some volcano.

But, given that this case (i.e. my presence inside that unknown soul) has occurred, the fact will also have some sense, it will also somehow escape its randomness. Is it really necessary, first of all, for the analysis of an illness to end with a "practical" therapy? I am not a politician or a sociologist: but a writer. The therapy of a writer differs from that of a politician or a sociologist, in that it is an intimate part of that analysis, it is inseparable from it, it is an integral element of it. In other words, the care and hope implicit in a writer's social analysis are his "expression": the more pertinent and poetic this is, the less it needs didactic, didactic, edifying, etc. integrations.

With this, mind you, I do not at all want to deny that we can also outline what the path of struggle and hope is in practice: this is what I did in A Violent Life. But Tommaso's story took place immediately after the events in Hungary, that is, at the moment in which a terrible state of crisis announced dawning and luminous solutions: the overthrow of the Stalinist era, an internal and fruitful renewal of the communist parties. It was an era of my life in which I, as a writer, could not help but always constantly keep in mind that perspective I was talking about and therefore this could not fail to be an immanent and continuous part of my inspiration.

The story of Accattone, however, is shorter: it lasts one summer, which is that of the Tambroni government. Everything in my nation, in those months, seemed to have fallen back into its eternal constants of greyness, superstition, servility and useless vitality.

It is at this moment that I looked out and looked at what was happening inside the soul of an underclass from the Roman suburbs (I insist on saying

that this is not an exception but a typical case of at least half of Italy): and I recognized all the ancient evils (and all the ancient, innocent good of pure life). I could only notice: his material and moral poverty, his ferocious and useless irony, his wandering and obsessed anxiety, his contemptuous laziness, his sensuality without ideals, and, together with all this, his atavistic, superstitious Catholicism of pagan. Therefore he dreams of dying and going to heaven. Therefore only death can "fix" a pale and confused act of redemption for him. There is no other solution around him, as around a huge number of people similar to him. A case like that of Tommasino is much, much rarer than a case like that of Accattone. With Tommasino I gave a drama, with Accattone a tragedy: a tragedy without hope, because I hope that few spectators will see a meaning of hope in the sign of the cross with which the film ends.

n. 26, 1 July 1961

## THE EXISTING INJUSTICE

*Dear Pasolini, I am writing to you on behalf of a large group of young people from the most diverse social categories to encourage you to write, to write in more newspapers so that it will be easy for you to meet those who, based only on hearsay, consider you a demon. Please answer us, a) why you, the son of wealthy people, came to communism; b) we know - from the newspapers - about your occupations: but why don't you take a tour through Italy and open a debate for the betterment of youth? c) we would like to know (it's the girls who ask) what you have "in the works" (writings or films). Thanks and best wishes.*

*Gianni Sottovia - Turin*

1) My father, it is true, was very rich in his youth. But when I was born he was a simple infantry lieutenant, and lived on his (measly) salary. I therefore had a typical lower-middle-class Italian childhood. Dignity and misery. I remember the endless summers of being a child: the expedients of my very meek, resigned mother to prepare, together with an aunt of mine who knew how to sew, clothes for the winter, the small, heroic savings, which my mother, my brother and me, in a sort of bold family alliance, sacrifices and dreams. The first time we went on holiday to Riccione was a kind of wonderful event, and I certainly didn't realize the squalor that the financial sacrifice cast on all the acts and aspects of our seaside life... in

short, I could write a volume of memories of dignified poverty. My mother, then, a teacher - and from a peasant family - saw the world in a clearly, albeit fatalistic, classist way: on one side there were the "gentlemen", on the other us, the half-poor and the poor. Naturally my mother was anti-fascist: and my grandmother called Mussolini with a name worthy of Carlo Emilio Gadda: Il Culatta.

Even from the crudest and simplest point of view, it was therefore not difficult for me to see life in the light of current injustice.

But the problem is not this: because in reality I "was rich, I owned", as I wrote in some of my verses recently published. I was rich sentimentally and mine was the possession of vast fields of culture, even, in certain areas, in certain sections, refined. It is the wealth from whose presence it is most difficult to free oneself, because it must be radically and structurally transformed. No act of renunciation counts. There are many children of billionaires who, out of moral scruple, due to the anguished anxiety of complexes, renounce their possessions: but this cannot be done by those who do not possess wealth in money, but in notions. I will never be able to forget that I possessed Rimbaud and Proust so much...

The Resistance gave the first shake to my castle of internal privileges. But the experience that led me to Marxism was the immediate post-war period: the struggles of the Friulian labourers. At the time I lived in Friuli, which was a bit of an ideal country, almost outside of space and time, a kind of sentimental and poetic Provence, for me, who wrote Rimbaudi or Verlain or Lorcian poems in Friulian. Those months of peasant struggles, in which I physically participated, eyes and ears wide open, transformed Friuli into a real country, and its inhabitants from ancient Provencals into living and historical beings. It would seem like such a simple thing: instead it was long and complicated: I had to make an entire journey back with reason from the territory I had entered with the craziest, most troubled and univocal of fantasies: and we know that fantasy has the wings...

Those are times long gone: but I can, in an elementary way, say this: that it was the direct experience of the problems of others that radically transformed my problems: and for this reason I always feel at the origins of a bourgeois communism an ethical instance, somewhat evangelical.

2) Because I have never been able to distinguish a "youth problem": if ever a particular problem has been implicated and absorbed by general problems, this is precisely the problem of youth. School, family institutions,

current morality, Catholicism, communism: these, and countless others, are the problems that young people face. Only by solving the former can the latter be solved. In itself, it becomes a pseudo-problem, sentimental and demagogic. In reality, the pattern of youth crises is always identical: it is reconstituted with each generation. Children and young people are in general adorable beings, full of that virgin substance of man which is hope, good will: while adults are in general imbeciles, made vile and hypocritical (alienated) by the social institutions, in which As they grew up, they gradually came together. I express myself a bit colourfully, I know: but unfortunately the judgment that can be given of a society like ours is, more or less colourfully, this. You young people have only one duty: that of rationalizing the sense of imbecility that adults give you, with their solemn hypocrisies, their decrepit and biased institutions. Unfortunately, however, the enormous majority of you end up capitulating, as soon as the gear of economic necessity traps you, it makes it alien to you. All this can only be escaped through a meticulous and relentless exercise of intelligence and critical spirit. I couldn't recommend anything else to young people. And it would be a very boring litany, mine.

3) I am writing a book, which I don't know whether to call a novel, which tells the story of the descent into hell along Dante's lines (a Dante read from comics) of a prostitute: in hell all the protagonists of our story, of our news, of our typical daily life.

I'm also thinking about another film: but at this moment, with Accattone still dubbing, it's absolutely premature to talk about it...

n. 27, 8 July 1961

## MY BROTHER

*Dear Pasolini, I am addressing you not for a dialogue or to explain my ideas to you and then hear your opinion: I am writing to ask you to enlighten me on an event, something that no one can do better than you. I therefore ask you to respond to this letter a little out of the ordinary, even if what I am about to ask you may cause you displeasure. On the occasion of April 25th, fascist posters appeared on the walls of Rome which, with the obvious aim of throwing mud at the Resistance, wondered why those partisans were not also commemorated (and they mentioned some names of those partisans) who were murdered for order of the Communist International. I would have given little importance to this poster, as to all*

*posters and other fascist news, if it had not been named among the others "slaughtered by order of the Communist International", his brother. This amazed me and led me to write to you so that you want to let me and everyone else know the story of his brother and thus honor the memory of him that they tried to tarnish. Best regards.*

*Giovanni Venenzani via Lago Tana 16, Rome*

I don't know what this "Communist International" is: only the infantile and provincial imagination of fascists can imagine such entities, nebulous and hostile, true monsters of the sleep of reason.

If it were not for this horrendous vagueness, the manifesto you are telling me about should not even be taken into consideration. I am not responding to that poster, therefore, but to you who asks me for news of my poor brother with such a friendly spirit.

The story can be told in two words: my mother, my brother and I were displaced from Bologna in Friuli, to Casarsa. My brother continued his studies in Pordenone: he was in high school, he was nineteen. He immediately joined the Resistance. I, slightly older than him, had convinced him to adopt the most ardent anti-fascism, with the passion of the catechumens, because I too, a boy, had only two years ago come to the knowledge that the world in which I had grown up without any prospects was a ridiculous and absurd world. Some communist friends from Pordenone (at the time I had not yet read Marx, and I was liberal, with a tendency towards the Action Party) took Guido with them to an active struggle. After a few months, he left for the mountains, where he was fighting. An edict from Graziani, who called him to arms, had been the occasional cause of his departure, the excuse before my mother. I accompanied him to the train, with his briefcase, where the revolver was hidden inside a book of poetry. We hugged: it was the last time I saw him.

In the mountains between Friuli and Yugoslavia, Guido fought long and valiantly for a few months: he had enlisted in the «Osoppo» division, which operated in the Venezia Giulia area together with the «Garibaldi» division. They were terrible days: my mother felt that Guido would never return. A hundred times he could have fallen fighting against the fascists and the Germans: because he was a boy of generosity who did not admit any weakness, any compromise. Instead he was destined to die in an even more tragic way.

You know that Venezia Giulia is on the border between Italy and Yugoslavia: so, in that period, Yugoslavia tended to annex the entire territory, and not just what, in reality, belonged to it. In short, a struggle of nationalisms has arisen. My brother, although a member of the Action Party, although intimately socialist (it is certain that today he would have been at my side), could not accept that an Italian territory, such as Friuli, could be the target of Yugoslav nationalism. He resisted and fought. In recent months, in the mountains of Venezia Giulia the situation was desperate, because everyone was between two fires. As you know, the Yugoslav Resistance, even more than the Italian one, was communist: so Guido found Tito's men as enemies, among whom there were also Italians, naturally, whose political ideas he at that moment he essentially shared, but could not share, the immediate, nationalistic politics.

He died in a way that I can't bear to describe: he could have even saved himself that day: he died to rush to the aid of his commander and his companions. I believe that there is no communist who can disapprove of the actions of the partisan Guido Pasolini. I am proud of him, and it is the memory of him, of his generosity, of his passion, that forces me to follow the path I follow. The fact that his death occurred like this, in a complex and apparently difficult situation to judge, gives me no hesitation. It only confirms me in the belief that nothing is simple, nothing happens without complication and suffering: and that what matters above all is the critical clarity that destroys words and conventions, and goes to the bottom of things, into their secret and inalienable truth.

n. 28, 15 July 1961

## DANNUNZIANI IN SLIPPERS

*I will tell you first of all that I was unaware, until a few months ago, of your existence, your name and your activity.*

*But now, first from some crime and crime news articles, then from some "teasing" on the radio, then again from reading some of your writings, I learned of your existence and that you were a writer, a critic, a poet, etc. .. Alright then.*

*One more, one less doesn't hurt and even if your attitudes in the aesthetic-literary context; your very modest familiarity with what it means to write in Italian that is not suitable for readers of «Vie Nuove»; her categorical and unappealing judgments on things, men and problems that*

*Ella cannot know, evaluate and understand, left me a little doubtful about the man and the writer (let's call him that); on the other hand, some of your "to the end", some of your very risky and fundamentally naive statements, amused the old polemicist who dozes and sneers in me.*

But in these last few weeks, between you personally (with that iconoclastic and even paradoxical response to that good man from Teano who, out of his goodness, asks Mr. P.P. Pasolini for mercy for D'Annunzio...) and Bo's review to a Your book appeared in a recent «European», you and your exegete, I would almost say your hagiographer, have exceeded the limit. Far from "generic and aberrant Crucianism", far from "stylistic disgust from one man of letters to another" and similar rubbish. Thank goodness, Mr. Pasolini, that the poet is dead otherwise with an adjective he would reduce you to mush.

*Even with his rhetoric (but it was his), even with certain forms that can be forgiven him, even with certain attitudes that smack of narcissism, D'Annunzio is D'Annunzio and will remain so for the centuries and it takes more than a hundred Pasolini and a thousand Bo (and Ungaretti and Montale and Quasimodo and, in short, anyone who has picked up the pen in the last sixty years) to be able to make a comparison, at least as far as Italian literature is concerned.*

And I don't want to indulge in quotations, I don't want to pepper my prose with adjectives, I don't want to mention the judgments of leading men of letters, I don't want to remember the enormous linguistic heritage, the cadenced sparkle of his prose and poems, the playwright and the Man of Timavo and Carnaro: I leave to you and your twisted exegete Bo the incense censer for other Gods. This has an altar too high for my poor incense to reach, but please at least have a sense of proportion. You see, Mr. Pasolini, that by not signing I am not going beyond the limits of a serene and polite polemic, let's call it a rectification, and therefore I won't tell you anything else that I would like to say if I signed.

*If I don't sign it's because my name wouldn't mean anything to you and because I don't want to associate it with yours and because I haven't written in a newspaper or publication since 1944 and I certainly don't want to make a return on such a paper now. But you feel from how I write to you that I am not the usual "vile anonymous" and if you publish this - time and desire permitting - I will write to you again since both you and your friend*

*Bo (you more than him, to be honest) interest me , perhaps from a zoological point of view alone.*

*And while we're at it, try to avoid acting like a little populist who's two generations late, review and correct your lame Italian from a popular evening university, tell Bo (the hermetic critic who loves to write difficult at all costs: he reminds me certain pages by Céline written in argot and certain reports by young people attending some current congress...) not to exaggerate because by exaggerating one falls into the ridiculous and the ridiculous buries one.*

*And maybe, and it won't be bad, believe me, both of you read a bit of Guicciardini and Guerrazzi, of Manzoni and Verga, maybe of Baldini and Panzini, maybe of Brocchi and Gotta (... Don't be horrified... ), perhaps by Monelli and Ansaldo. Please send me your best regards.*

*M.P.*

The anonymity in which you cordially hide, kind sir, is not so thick as to hide the fact that you are a fascist. In 1944 he stopped publishing, and pour cause; then he remained on the sidelines, and pour cause, and now he is here again, with a detached, lively and a bit bohemian tone, acting as an idealist. We therefore understand how she loves D'Annunzio, we understand how she calls this poet "the Man of the Timavo and the Camaro", we understand how she irritates Bo, who, during the fascist period, was exactly the opposite of what you wanted him to be a man of letters, and it is clear, finally, how unpleasant I am to her, a furious enemy of the institutional stupidity of the fascists. As for Baldini, Panzini, Brocchi, Gotta, Monelli and Ansaldo, they are names that I advise you to write on his tombstone.

Dear reader, look a little at the letter to which I responded here in two words. It's quite an interesting document. It testifies to a type of fascism that is not very widespread, yet essential. I don't know if Mussolini's regime would have been able to survive for so many years if the press and the radio had not been able to count on a large group of people similar to the author of this letter. They represented the cultural fabric of fascism. That is, madness made the norm.

There is a profound and mysterious masochism in this letter. A person of a certain culture (the anonymous person has at least a degree or diploma), who knows classical literature, and for better or worse, national history,

rejects outright all the experience that can derive from such knowledge in order to humiliate and annihilate it in a kind of exalted "reduction" to the petty-bourgeois cultural meanness on which fascism was based and lived. Now the ignorance of the average Italian who has attended state schools is well known: and it is no wonder that his lack of cultural awareness was ready to accept the ideological aberration of the reaction. It is understandable how an ignorant and conformist petty bourgeois could accept, I would say, almost with pleasure the narcissistic fascist "pseudo-concepts". But the thing is less easy to understand when instead of a professional or an employee it is a man of culture, a publicist, a journalist, a man of letters: who, at least, should possess the elementary tools to identify and analyze aberrations ideological and historical like the fascist one.

It's true: the Italian culture of the first half of the twentieth century is a very miserable thing: it is a provincial by-product of post-romantic and decadent European culture. Gramsci wrote pages of absolute value on this. Fascism itself is a product of such culture, at a high level. The superman, Wagner, the narcissistic regression to a remote type of life, Hellenic or Roman, the exaltation of the ego, the contempt for the masses, the inimitable life (here we arrive at D'Annunzio): they are all highly cultural elements level destined to form the fascist "taste".

Now, what was a man of letters, a university professor, a journalist in woolen wool? A humorous fact, first of all, if you want to laugh. But in reality the psychological gradation of this depravity is not that complicated: it happened more or less like this: our man (let's say the anonymous person in this letter) was originally a D'Annunzio (i.e. a decadent provincial, with a head full of prose art, of bad narcissism, of classical literature understood as national glory rather than as an evolving historical product, in short of corrupt and academic humanism); the second ideal step was the transformation of this sedentary and scholastic titanism into a craving for action (the patriotic exploits, the uniforms, the truncheons, the marches: the active exhumation of a dead and buried past, in this case the Roman legionary, the navigator Venetian, etc. etc.); the third step... And here we must remember that the conformist Italian petty bourgeois has as its main characteristic, together with the thirst for servility, the fear of ridicule (the letter from the anonymous person in question speaks clearly: «... Don't exaggerate, because by exaggerating we fall into the ridiculous and the ridiculous buries us." The third step is therefore a "correction" - towards the

right-thinking, petty-bourgeois, "smart" normality - of the D'Annunzio monster, of the warrior in woolen wool. So everything falls into place. Our anonymous man has put on the hat of the "old polemicist who dozes and sneers in him": and he feels, with profound consolation, that a little stylistic liveliness, a little humour, a little dishevelment, a little of bohème, a bit of classical culture puts everything right, rectifies with a series of euphemistic and reductive corrections, the excessive seriousness of the archaic and belligerent fascist ideal man. In short, our anonymous person seems to be saying, cheerfully wiping his sweat under his straw hat, with an eye filled with ironic happiness: «There, you see? It is not true that fascists are exaggerated fanatics: I accept all fascism, including Eichmann, of course! However, I am here, in straw hat, I have a little family and I read the classics... My hatred against communists is even cordial! I go to dinner and drinks at the tavern with the Marxists! My awareness of this hatred is so deep and boundless that I laugh at it!

And so men of culture, whose names in Italy are still covered with honor or respect, dressed in woolen wool, with the excuse that, at home, they were D'Annunzio in slippers.

n. 29, 22 July 1961

## DO I HAVE TO BAPTIZE MY CHILD?

In n. 27 of «Vie Nuove», responding to a reader, you write that children and young people are in general adorable beings, full of that virgin substance of man which is hope, while adults are in general imbeciles made vile and hypocrites (alienated) from the social institutions in which, as they grew up, they gradually became embedded. How many times, as a young man, have I heard adults tell me that the years will bring advice. Now I have reached the "middle of our life's journey": I am not yet cowardly but I am afraid of becoming one. I am a communist and I had to emigrate to support my family since in my homeland, despite being specialized, I have never managed to find work. However, I want to return home. How many times have I already been advised to keep my political "faith" and my ideas hidden. Here I managed to find work and live in relative comfort. Should I give up my idea for this or sell out? I am not married in the Church. I have two children. What was born in Italy, for all the circumstances you can imagine, was baptized. The second however, no. We are far from home and family pressures, at least those, we don't feel here. Since I don't intend to

stay here forever, I wonder if my son, once he returns to Italy, will also be told: the schoolboy should stand up, he's not baptized. How can I avoid such a shock for my child? I ask you for an answer and I thank you and greet you cordially.

*Niecos Andrei - Cassoney, Switzerland*

It's a good problem you pose to me: a real case of conscience... Do you really want to involve me in your responsibility towards your son! But you do it with so much integrity and clarity that I cannot escape your request for advice: to do it honestly and sincerely, I want to pretend to be a father, I want to pretend that your child is mine. What would I do? Going to baptize him would annoy me greatly: first of all because I enter churches only to gather - religiously - in front of their beauty, Romanesque, sixteenth century, baroque: performing the rites would seem embarrassing, intolerable ridiculousness to me. And then for my son: what right would I have to mortgage his future like this? Insert him, nominally, but without his will, into the ranks of Catholics? On the other hand, there is the danger that you yourself profile: as an adolescent, the unbaptized boy could suffer from subjective complexes and objective sorrows. Not only that, but I'll tell you more: there is also the danger that the unbaptized youth cannot stand this position which requires a strong critical spirit, and "regrets" the normality of other baptized people: that is, that he wants to be he too, who wishes to become Catholic, making Catholicism coincide with a "normality" taken away and lost from him. By not baptizing your child, you therefore risk making him a Catholic when he grows up, as avid as all catechumens. In your place, I would do this: I wouldn't baptize him now. But as soon as, around the age of twelve, thirteen, fourteen, that is, the moment in which the boy began to show some signs of awareness of his "diversity" compared to others, I would take him, I would give him a simple and undramatic speech, explaining the whole matter to him, and leaving him to choose whether to be baptized or not: with the awareness of the act. If you have been a good father, a truly democratic father, you will see that your son will not disappoint you.

n. 31, 5 August 1961

## THE BARBARITY OF RACISM

*Dear Pasolini, it wasn't just the "Dannunzians in slippers" who were the most splendid gems of the Italian collection; alongside them were also the Jewish fascists who, in Venice, swarmed in all the district circles. In 1931 (before the Man of Providence promulgated the racial laws), a bold Israelite who dictated the law at the Cannaregio club had me translated by around twenty thugs of the regime to the Manin Barracks, headquarters of the Venetian fascist movement. The reason? I had seriously offended the sire of Predappio, calling him "dictator" and this in the presence of witnesses. The interrogation lasted for two hours or more; useless was my reference to the dictatorship of Manin in Venice, of Garibaldi in Sicily, of Farini in Emilia. Since I was not a fascist (as I have never been) I was locked up in a cell until the following morning, not without having received four or five vigorous floggings during the night. The following morning, I was released "because the act does not constitute a crime". Protests for kidnapping with de facto actions? The "culture" of the twenty years did not allow it: it was better for me to run away with broken bones to avoid the worst. Here, dear Pasolini, is how the child learned; but after the promulgation of the racial laws, did the fascist Jews convert to Christianity and receive the Holy Sacraments? Here's what I would like to know. Sorry for the long chat and believe me with kind regards, yours*

*Giuseppe Dosi - Venice*

Have you read The Golden Glasses by Giorgio Bassani? It is a beautiful story, one of the most beautiful in recent Italian fiction. In it the author subtly establishes, without any didactic clumsiness, a certain equivalence between the ideal destiny of an elderly inverted man and a young Jew, at the time of fascism. The objective conditions of this equivalence are evident: a forced marginality with respect to the rules of society, an unsolicited, unwanted, perhaps hated to the point of anguish, "diversity", and the consequent psychological "complex". Bassani does not force the material: he touches it with extreme lightness, with poetic allusive force. In reality, this subject is extremely significant and rich in topics: an entire essay, a volume could be written about it.

However: the "psychological complex" that I was telling you is determined, but not decisive. Many possible solutions arise from it. For example, conformism can arise, however paradoxical this may seem. The complexed abnormal, in fact, not wanting to accept the abnormality that relegates him to a minority of "different" compared to the society where he

lives, and indeed suffering horribly from it, tries to forcefully fit into the majority, accepting and making all its canons his own, all the rules, all the institutions. And, as always happens, he ends up, as they say, being "more realistic than the king". There is no one who is more fanatical, tougher, more intransigent than an abnormal person who defends the norm.

For the most part, this type of abnormality is repressed: that is, it does not want to accept or even know its own abnormality. He silences it, removes it, spreads an impenetrable veil over it.

Fascism and Nazism were full of such "repressed abnormals": sick, deformed, dwarfs, impotent, inverted people who did not want to accept their inferiority, did not even mention it, and, in return, violently defended a viriloid ideology. and domineering - which was conformity by definition.

There is no reason why some weak Jews would escape this mechanism, which unfortunately still regulates a large part of human relationships; atrocious prehistoric survival, as a tribe, in modern man, who is far from being truly free... A Jew, at the time of fascism, could not help but have the nefarious temptation to accept fascism, as an alibi for his own diversity : like, precisely, a sick person, a deformed person, a dwarf, an impotent person, an invert. Some Jews gave in: also because, moreover, they belonged precisely to that bourgeoisie of which fascism was the product. But this doesn't mean anything. It is not only ungenerous, but stupid, to generalize. It would be like blaming all dwarfs, because some short men felt like giants by being fascists; it would be like blaming all inverts, because some inverts have replaced their missing virility with the cruelty of the SS.

Moravia is right: at this moment the central problem of humanity is the racial problem. Everything tends to be cast in racist terms. Even anti-communism has something racist: I am sure that certain desperate fascists, certain painful Catholics (the "repressed" I was talking about earlier...) see communists as belonging to another "race"; and they draw all the typical reactions from it: horror, sense of impurity, scandal.

Look around the world: the relationship between whites and men of color, between Aryans and Jews, between members of one caste and those belonging to another caste: everything is placed in racist terms. Even, remember?, two or three years ago the offensive against teddy boys was typically racist... This is pure barbarism: and whoever is without at least a shadow of this barbarism, cast the first stone.

n. 32, 12 August 1961

# SECTARISM MAKES YOU INHUMAN

*I had a discussion with a comrade who had been a member of the PCI since 1921. He maintained that Jesus Christ fought for the equality and freedom of peoples and added that in 1921 the PCI printed portraits of Jesus. I came across "The pioneer". I read there: Jesus Christ also died on the cross so that all men would be equal and all would have justice (on the story of Spartacus). In the Gospel of the Apostles, in the parable of the Sower, it is written: «For to him who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from whom he does not have, even what he has will be taken away. Blessed is that servant whom the master finds doing his duty when he returns." I also kindly ask for an explanation of this evangelical phrase: "When you hear wars and rumors of wars, do not be afraid, this must happen."*

*L. F. - Terni*

It is almost a cliché to say that the moral dynamic of socialism is profoundly Christian. So much so that some somewhat squeamish left-wingers are ashamed of it and turn their noses up at "humanitarianism", "populism", etc. as if they were infectious diseases. We must no longer talk about loyalty, love, generosity, innocence, because otherwise the Asor Rosa decree that we are reactionaries and Christians. Sectarianism makes us inhuman, this is the truth. Or otherwise, those who are inhuman or less than human due to traumas, for their own private reasons, tend towards sectarianism, towards the short-sightedness of ideological-moralistic excess. In reality, for my part, I think that at the root or prehistory of every authentic socialist position, there is a Christian, evangelical feeling. And this, I would say, is due to a long historical tradition. Precisely in these days, during the long car ride from Venice to Rome, I enjoyed thinking of a "Brechtian" drama, in which God directly founds the Church, and then the Devil, little by little, indirectly, if take it.

Then it is clear: it would be ridiculous to look for pieces of support for Marx in the Gospel: what matters is the feeling of the Gospel, the substance of his preaching. Of course, you can read sentences like those you quote: and which you could no longer accept, at least if taken literally. But which, on the other hand, are historically justifiable. If at the time the Gospel was

written, people had not been so resigned to the idea of war and evil, the Gospel would have been a monstrum, outside of experience and history.

But why not want to interpret the "wars" of the Gospel as internal "wars"? In this sense, the phrase from the Gospel would fit very well and would, indeed, be a great lesson for conformists of any kind. Nothing in man is ever ordered or calmed down: within him it is necessary for there to be wars or rumors of wars, because otherwise he would remain outside the process that wants him to continuously evolve: and evolution is a crisis, it requires criticism , and therefore, pain and war.

n. 37, 23 September 1961

## ILLITERATE UP TO 21 YEARS

*Dearest Pasolini, that letter from M.P. disturbed me. For someone who poses as such "highness" and then begins by saying that he has never heard or read about Pasolini for a few months, this is not a great achievement. I agree with your answer. I sign myself, I am Pasquale Mossuto, member of the PCI, that reader who asked you questions about your and my Marxism and who willingly accepted your criticism. Dear Pasolini, I have never been to school, not even a day: today I am a university student. Fascism kept me illiterate until I was 21. I was born in 1926. My father died when I was not yet 10 years old. Without a pair of shoes, without bread, thrown into the woods to be an animal guardian. You say that everyone's Marxism is the result of many things. What I have said are the components of "my" Marxism. Seven years of military life, I tore out the syllables of knowledge one by one, word for word, as if each were attached with iron rings. You know, in military life, they called me "gavette eater", when I sat down to read some book in a corner of the dormitory, they threw orange peels on my head. I am not surprised by the anonymous letter. I appreciate your response though. I am writing to you as if I were carrying out an important act in my life.*

*Pasquale Mossuto Foggia*

This letter does not ask for a response. But I like to publish it here anyway, because it deserves to be read and pondered. If it does not ask for an answer, it does however ask, almost violently, for a counterpart of considerations. Which overlap numerous, confused, obvious. I would just like to refer to that Alarm We Are Fascists that I spoke about in the last

issue: the film, in which the document becomes the essence of the tragedy, a series of compressed and obsessive symbols, from which nothing seems to be saved, on which fascism is spread like a fatal and untreatable tabe: yet how much energy is born precisely from the most tragic symbols of that tragedy! The flight of communist refugees from Spain won by Franco, the massacre of the Jews, the retreat of Russia, the crying of mothers over the infinite graves left by the war. The miracle always seems to arise at the lowest level, in the hearts of the people. The best of the bourgeois class - and there were some, and they fought! - seen like this, in this tragic synthesis, they themselves seem to be products of this source of proletarian energy, on which the forces of bourgeois order can carry out massacres, violence, domination, but which they never manage to possess, just as one cannot possess life if you don't have it. The truly living of the bourgeois class come to identify with the great life of the proletarian class, which is the only one, by definition, that can resist. And, I repeat, its moments of most desperate or most glorious resistance have something miraculous about them: the inevitability of progress, so rational, then takes place in stupendous irrational moments. Look at all the Italian Resistance. This letter from Pasquale Mossuto from Puglia describes one of the many small miracles: the barefoot underclass, without bread, lost in one of the most miserable depressed areas, who, right in the heart of the fascist war, finds the way to become anti-fascist, to take possession of culture, the privilege of the ruling class, to acquire a political conscience that makes him a free man.

## DOSTOEWSKIJ E VICTOR HUGO

*Dear Pasolini, I am a worker who turns to you to ask for your opinion. I had an argument with a friend of mine. He claimed that Dostoewsky is better and more read than Victor Hugo. I, on the other hand, said that the comparison could not be made without having studied in depth: we are both workers. Now, I ask you to please tell us your opinion, you who are a very knowledgeable modern writer.*

*Mario De Santis - Rome*

In short: you want me to be the referee of a bet! And since it's not a bet of alienated people (for example whether Lojacono or Greaves is bigger...), I don't refuse to intervene. And it's easy for me: because it's a matter of

purely and simply stating my opinion. The somewhat childish "absurdity" of your bet prevents me from falling, on this occasion, into the excess of seriousness which is unfortunately - for me - habitual (and which has also been criticized by the readers of this column ). I don't love Victor Hugo, and instead I actually venerate Dostoewskij. I don't like the rhetorical art of the former (one critic said that Victor Hugo was as stupid as the Himalayas): a rhetoric that he believed to be, with his own tools, unquestionably master of all reality. Yes, at times, rhetoric, in its supreme insincerity, can be sublime: and Victor Hugo wrote some astonishing poems for this crazy sublimity, for this totally insincere perfection. But that doesn't make me love him. Dostoewsky was exactly the opposite; he was never "above" reality, ordering it with Olympian rhetorical laws, but he was always "inside" it, incessantly inventing ways of communicating it, of being equal to it, of not letting it escape. There is no page of Dostoewskij that does not run the risk of being ugly, unequal, gratuitous, wrong, excessive: and instead, precisely for this reason, it is always sincere and poetic: his chaos always ends up being pure order: the its contradictory rigor. I read The Idiot when I was fifteen: it was the first serious book I read, after Salgari's books (along with Shakespeare's Macbeth): and the emotion I felt from it has not yet faded.

n. 39, 7 October 1961

## A FORCE FOR PEACE

*Dear Pasolini, I often hear Russia spoken of as the most powerful nation in the world. If a war were to break out, would Russia be able to destroy a powerful nation like America in a short time? I'm young: you explain these things to me. I will feel calmer.*

*Normanno Luppi, Limidi di Soliera - Modena*

But my boy, didn't the flights of Titov and Gagarin tell you anything? It seems to me that, as symptoms, they are overwhelming. However, I would like to tell you this: do not consider the technical and industrial strength of the USSR as a destructive force: do not even dream of the possibility of the destruction of "a powerful nation like America". Although Marxist ideology is classist, the ultimate goal it sets itself is the redemption of the whole man, including the American. And by destroying, nothing is redeemed. Have faith in Russian technical and industrial strength: but above all have faith in

the idea of which the USSR is the standard-bearer nation. It is an idea inseparable from the idea of peace.

n. 40, 14 October 1961

## POETRY, CINEMA, POLITICS

Dear Mr. Pasolini, I understand what you say about D'Annunzio and, in general, I share your opinions. All that mass of words, even if inserted with a certain virtuosity, were always difficult and burdensome for me. What you say is magnificent: «fascism and poetry can never coincide». Because poetry is love between humans. In fascism, however, this noble sentiment is unknown. Tell me: do you like Pascoli? To me, yes. A little too resigned but dignified, human. Then, in the «Paese», I read the review of her latest poems. They called her "decadent". I haven't read her poems (with the little pension money it's increasingly difficult to buy a few books), but from the passages reported in «Vie Nuove», the accusation doesn't seem fair to me. I saw La giorno balorda and I appreciated it. The problem, however, is another: even those who pretend to ignore them know the things that film says. I move on to the last topic. You once gave me grief by criticizing Stalin. I have never created fetishes for myself, I know that Stalin was only a man and, as such, he could make mistakes. Indeed, he certainly made a mistake but the positive things that man did had a significant impact on contemporary history. I believe he will believe me if I tell her that I am disinterested and sincere and that I spoke to her with an open heart because of the respect I have for her.

*A. Stecchini - Viareggio*

Dear friend, your letter is a real conversation, full of mentioned and overlapping topics. I would like to answer her with equal enthusiasm, because she is very nice. But the place in which I answer them forces me to a certain order, to a certain "simplifying" dominion of the things to say. I will therefore answer you by topic:

D'Annunzio. Now, on D'Annunzio, either I write a hundred-page essay, or I never open my mouth again. She agrees with me: and therefore exempts me from going back to it.

Pastures. I graduated in Pascoli. On Pascoli I wrote perhaps my best (or at least most useful to others) critical essay. It is printed in the first issue of the magazine «Officina», a Bolognese magazine which has now ceased

publication, and is, I believe, difficult to find. However, if you are interested in that essay, you can find it republished in my critical volume Passion and ideology (Garzanti). I don't love him very much, Pascoli: but he is the only one of the famous triad, who I truly esteem as a poet, if nothing else, a poet of linguistic invention. He was a dry, inhibited, infertile man, but he made up for this with a vast linguistic inspiration. All the innovative experiences of our century, good and bad, somehow originated in him: from Montale, to the Orphics, to the dialect speakers. Therefore he is important culturally. And, note well, all the stylistic tendencies that developed from his experiments - often crude and provincial, albeit - were typical of the cultural anti-fascism of the twentieth century. A purely passive anti-fascism, it's true, bourgeois: but that's already a lot, don't you think?

The crazy day. Communists often reproach their companions or friends who work in cinema for not being communist enough. Even the critics, competent in every sense, who know very well how things are. She, despite her kind and frank character, makes somewhat of the same mistake. Do you know that La giorno balorda was seized - with the usual pretextual arguments - but in reality, as was confided to the producer, in camera charitatis, because it was considered "the most communist film of these years"? Imagine... If only we had mentioned in the film what should be done to solve unemployment, we, poor authors, would have been lynched, to say the least.

It is inhuman, therefore, and dishonest, to ask "busy" writers and directors to do what they cannot do. Thank you very much, I would know what script or film to make if I were free. On the other hand, would it perhaps be less inhuman or less dishonest if you asked us not to make films, not to express ourselves, to remain silent, given that we cannot do so with complete freedom?

I think that even films like La giorno balorda can have their weight, their polemical charge, even if ideologically weak and mutilated. It is already a great thing that those who "know these things, but pretend not to know them" are forced to take them into consideration, if only by resorting to their henchmen to prevent the release of works that denounce the existence of "those things".

Ideological fundamentalism has all my sympathies. I am for ideological fundamentalism, for absolute coherence, for an intact morality of thought and incapable of compromise. But ideological fundamentalism is not a

catechism! It's one thing not to compromise and it's one thing not to historicize and humanize the judgment! On La giorno balorda you must not implacably bring your judgment as an uncorrupted communist; but he must take La giorno balorda for what it is: a film produced in Italy, under the eyes of the Roman and Milanese censors, and which, despite being such, is, according to those censors, the maximum that can be done in terms of denunciation against the bourgeoisie of well-being: and then, it is the film of a director, Bolognini, who is not a communist at all, but simply a bourgeois, basically Catholic, now secular and free. It is absurd, ahistorical, and schematically ideological, to ask La giorno balorda for anything other than what he has given.

Stalin. I'm probably not so much younger than her that I haven't had the same fundamental experiences as her. I too, during the war and immediately after, loved that mysterious and symbolic man with all my heart. With hundreds of thousands of citizens, I naively saw him as the true liberator. I was very young, and almost an infant in politics. Now, that myth, as far as I'm concerned, is totally exhausted: what remains mythical is Stalin's military greatness, and his "iron fist" undoubtedly necessary in a long and terrible period of emergency. But I am a man who would rather lose than win with unfair and ruthless methods. Serious fault on my part, I know! And the great thing is that I have the nerve to defend this fault, to consider it almost a virtue... Stalin certainly didn't love Dostoewskij's heroes. I cannot forgive Stalin for the repressions, the injustices, the concentration camps. Communism is perfectly useless if it does not consider respect for the human person as sacred. Capitalism, and not only in its extremes - fascism and Nazism - is hateful precisely because it does not experience this fundamental respect: and, in the name of its supreme interests - which are always cloaked in idealistic pseudo-reasons - it humiliates the human person.

The Russian people who entered history with the October Revolution - apart from the worker aristocracies who led them - were a people of peasants, with immense sub-proletarian masses. It was therefore inevitable that the revolution, applying itself to this immense, powerful, vital but historically immature body, would suffer attractions from the past: a past of pure vitality, of immature violence. Stalin was the living, painted symbol of this somewhat regressive force imposed on the historical cycle of the revolution. At least that's how it seems to me. Mine is not the opinion of a

competent politician, but of a man sensitive to political problems. Now that much of the blind, the irrational, the fanatical, the archaic, the infantile that the enormous Russian masses brought to the revolutionary force, precisely because of the fatal advance of the revolution, has been running out: and Stalin truly appears as a man of other times. , completely sold out.

Perhaps he was necessary. Now he certainly isn't anymore. And it is useless to regret it, or to make nostalgic palinodies of it.

n. 42, 28 October 1961

## A CONTROVERSY ABOUT POLITICS AND POETRY

*Dear Mr. Pasolini, I read with amazement (in n. 37 of «Vie Nuove») your response to L. F. di Terni, in which he affirms the possibility of kinship between socialism and Christianity. I am not of his opinion: the Gospel is imbued with resignation, charity, pity, renunciation, forgiveness-feelings that have always served as a support for the exploiting classes. The industrialist's wife, a member of charities, gives a few lira to the poor man, exploited by her industrialist husband. The Gospel is of no use to the working class struggling to free itself from the yoke of capitalism. Christianity and scientific socialism, therefore, cannot have points in common. Christianity was born in a slave society, it is permeated with contemplative infantilism, it is irrational. It is true that Christianity, during slavery, had to face the persecutions ordered by the leaders of pagan society: this is why it can cloak itself in a halo of martyrdom. But then during the Middle Ages, Christianity revealed its obscurantist nature, persecuting those who wanted to progress. Allow me to ask you then what in your opinion the authentic socialist position would be? Not the Marxist one? The facts demonstrate that Christianity tries by all means to hinder the advance of Socialism, it is the enemy of materialistic dialectics as it was of the Enlightenment. And do not believe that the essence of Christianity has been betrayed by the Papacy. In fact, the Church is reactionary in politics because its ideology is reactionary.*

*Giordano Siviero - Terville (France)*

I respond to Giordano Siviero's letter starting from the exchange of letters between Salinari and a group of Cremonese communists, which appeared in the previous issue of «Vie Nuove». The Cremonese readers make me the same objections as Siviero: taking them to more general and definitive

consequences, and, unfortunately - for them, for their loyalty - directing them to Salinari rather than to me. As if, deaf and blind, they did not see in this column of mine the maximum effort of sincerity and intellectual good will. What it costs me - excuse me my friends - such absolute sincerity, in all places, is certainly not difficult to understand. And it seems to me that it irrefutably demonstrates the strength of my ideology: my absolute faith in it. I've been struggling in this position since '45. And what Salinari wrote in his response to the Cremonese seems even offensive to me, namely that I tried to lead a battle for communism as a "mass party", "at least until now".

Why did Salinari manage to be so unhumanly, and, for me, so painfully, offensive? It is easy to say: because, in his judgment on me, regarding my latest book, The Religion of My Time, he was fundamentally insincere. He didn't do a critical examination of conscience. He circumvented, with a certain hypocrisy typical of sectarianism, the real problem.

In reality, there is a "crisis" in my book: and it is said, expressed, explicit. Why not address it directly, then? Are we or are we not friends and companions? In my book there were criticisms directed at the Communist Party: criticisms, naturally, in the language of poetry: but still easily decipherable and translatable into logical terms. There were criticisms of the party, the concrete and operational one, the one that is hic et nunc. Certainly not to Marxist ideology and Communism! Basically what was I saying?

I was saying that unfortunately, forms of hypocrisy, tactics and bourgeois moralism were also traceable in the Italian Communist Party. By force! It would, moreover, be absurd if this were not the case. Precisely because any human act or situation has complexity and problematic nature as its immovable characteristic. Salinari should, honestly, attack those points of the book that said precisely these things. And don't attack him elsewhere, on the weak points - which certainly exist - such as that bit of anarchism, humanitarianism, evangelical survival which are, after all, irrational elements without which it is difficult to conceive, in this exact historical period, a poetic action . By attacking these points, Salinari did something obvious: and he easily placed himself on the side of reason.

This is why I accuse him of a certain sectarian insincerity: something I also accuse the Cremonese of. What matters is defending a political line, then, according to Salinari and the people of Cremona, and not the basis - rational and irrational: human and historical - of a political position?

The good thing is that I perfectly agree with the Cremonese; precisely where Salinari declares himself to be in disagreement with them.

They say that poetry - even in its authentic moment, and especially in this one - is a translation of the ideology that produces it. Salinari, on the other hand, says no: that ideological schemes do not make poetry. For me, I repeat, the Cremonese are right. Only... And here we need to specify, analyze, get lost in the infinite complications of every human act...

Neither Salinari nor the people of Cremona, it seems to me, know what the ideology of a poet is. They have a completely schematic idea of it: on the one hand the political ideology immersed in the concrete form of a party ideology, which is, for them, by definition correct (despite the XX and XXI Congresses of the CPSU), on the other poor idiots who make noises, and, when they feel like it, make good ones too.

Conceiving the relationship between ideology and poetry in this way, it is clear that the two things will never have anything to do with each other. The idea that Salinari has of a poet seems to me to be a very romantic idea, and yes, bourgeois and decadent! Yes, irrationalistic! In reality, the ideology of a poet is not only the political one, in line or not, with that of a party. It's that too. But to it is added, to integrate it, seamlessly, with the compactness and complexity of every cultural phenomenon, its specific literary ideology.

The ideology of The religion of my time is deduced from The religion of my time: it does not pre-exist in a more or less rigid political scheme. The political opinions in my book are not just political opinions, but are, at the same time, poetic; that is, they have undergone that radical transformation of quality which is the stylistic process.

For example, the fascists accuse one of my poems (an epigram entitled To my nation) of being offensive to the homeland, to the point of bordering on the crime of contempt. Except then to forgive myself - in the best cases - because I am a poet, that is, a madman. Like Pound: who was a fascist, a traitor to his homeland, but he is forgiven in the name of poetry-madness... This is what happens when we discriminate between ideology and poetry: by reading that epigram of mine only ideologically the fascists deduce from it only the literal meaning , logical, which is configured as an insult to the homeland. But then, rereading it aesthetically, they deduce from it a purely irrational, that is, insignificant meaning. In reality, the logical moment and the poetic moment coexist in that epigram of mine, intimately and inextricably fused. The letter says, yes: my homeland is unworthy of esteem

and deserves to sink into its sea: but the real meaning is that, who is unworthy of esteem, who deserves to sink into the sea, is the reactionary bourgeoisie of my homeland, i.e. my homeland understood as the seat of a dominant, right-thinking, hypocritical and inhuman class. I could now take a polemical piece from my book regarding certain sectarian - that is, lazy, conformist - positions of the Italian communists: that is, the survivals of the past. And come to the same conclusions.

For example, an epigram entitled To the Red Flag. In it I outline a tragic situation of regression in the South (as we know, coinciding with the economic progress, at least apparent, of the North) and I conclude by hoping that the red flag once again becomes a poor rag waved by the poorest of Southern farmers. Perhaps for this reason, Salinari calls me, bluntly, without appeal, "populist". Well, if he uses this term in the sense in which Lenin uses it in a concrete historical situation, to define a concrete historical movement (one which saw the revolution as a product of the peasant classes, outside the guidance of the worker aristocracies), I refuse naturally to be defined as "populist". I would be an imbecile if I thought that the Revolution could be made in Melissa, without Modena. But if Salinari uses the term populist in the sense that the word has now taken on commonly, that is, in the sense of "Marxist who loves the people with a love that pre-exists Marxism, or partly outside of it", then (as I will try to demonstrate later) I might even accept the definition. It is clear that in that epigram of mine the letter can make one think of a historical populism (the one Lenin argued against) or a sentimental populism (the one Salinari accuses me of): but in reality, if read in its implications, that epigram raises simply a live and real issue on the table, and which, in my opinion, the PCI has not yet addressed with full energy and full conscience. His position towards the southern underclass seems classic to me, yes, but also old. At this moment, in which neo-capitalism tends either to put the worker aristocracies to sleep (in a resignation that is not at all evangelical!) or tends to make them rigidify themselves into hard positions (like the Cremonese group), it is evident that the problem of the underclass southern - immense - is placed in a new light: a virgin and mature mass, to be called to its historical function.

Here is what my real thought was under that epigram which, on the surface, could ideologically lead to the accusation of populism being formulated against me. In short: the ideology of a writer is his literary

conscience (articulated in a series of opinions, some clear, others, of course, confused) which provides for merging in a stylistically irreversible way the patterns of real political ideology and the patterns of aesthetic ideology, which often have two non-coinciding histories.

In my case: the political ideology is the Marxist one, but the aesthetic ideology comes - although profoundly modified - from the decadent experience, and therefore drags with it the wreckage of an outdated culture: evangelism, humanitarianism, etc.

Political ideology is projected towards the future, aesthetic ideology (essential data in the operation of a writer) contains the past. A clash, and at the same time a fusion.

In other words, the ideology of a writer is his political ideology - shared, as a logical and moral fact, with all those who think like him - but immersed in a conscience in which the maximum of individualistic particularism is given, with all its historical and concrete survivals and contradictions.

The verification of what happens in this collision, in this fusion, is the true ideology of a writer; what he expresses poetically must be brought back to his specific ideology, and not to the rational and objective one that he professes as a citizen.

So I believe that the problem should be posed with a certain at least terminological clarity.

I would now have to respond to Giordano Siviero's letter which accuses (with the Cremonese) my evangelism, that is, what I have defined as a "cultural residue" surviving in my aesthetic ideology, that is, in my irrational moment.

But since my answer is already long, I will limit myself to asking a question in my turn: if the worker Siviero and the group of Cremonese answer me, I will reply.

The question is this: «By what movement of conscience - of his personal conscience - does a man born bourgeois, educated in a bourgeois world (like me, for example, or like Alicata, or like Togliatti...) decide on a certain point in his life to "betray" his social class, and to embrace the cause of the working and peasant class? and he dedicates himself entirely to this struggle of his, at the cost of the most serious renunciations and sacrifices?

The question, thus posed, I know, is a bit naive and peremptory. But let's pretend that this is a journalistic investigation...

not. 44, November 9, 1961

# SALINARI: RESPONSE AND REPLY

Dear Pasolini, already in the past (in the unforgettable 1956, if I'm not mistaken) we had the opportunity to argue rather bitterly and I had the opportunity to point out to you that you have a bad temper, peevish "like that of a child". I won't repeat that statement today because you have grown a lot, not only in years, but in skill and fame: however, the fact remains that you are touchy. Your response to Giordano Siviero in the last issue cannot otherwise be justified, which, in reality, is a response to the things I recently wrote about you.

*Let's examine, objectively, the problems that were on the table. There was the question of the relationship, in a writer, between ideology and poetry. Well, after a long example, you arrive at exactly the same conclusions that I arrived at in a couple of periods: that is, the "objective rational" ideology (I use your words to understand each other better, not because they are precise) that a writer explicitly professes is only one element of the complicated dialectical process that leads to that knowledge of reality that is specific to poetry. You just don't have the courage (which Marx and Engels had) to get to the bottom of it and recognize that, in the course of that process, "rational and objective" ideology can (must not) be contradicted and that, consequently, a writer who professes a reactionary ideology can arrive at a very high and therefore progressive poetic result.*

*Again, there was the judgment on your last book as a book attesting to a crisis: and you recognize it. I spoke of a development crisis ("a rupture that should herald a new balance on a higher level"); you confirm it. I indicated as terms of the dynamics of that crisis the two poles of the people as spontaneity and the people as awareness. Without meaning to, you agree with me when you write: «Political ideology is projected towards the future, aesthetic ideology (an essential fact in the operation of a writer) contains the past. A clash, and at the same time a fusion."*

*Finally, there was the problem of the poetic rendering of your book, that is, which moment of that fusion presented the stylistic coherence and cognitive capacity of reality that we call poetry.*

And I identified it in the encounter «with the anarchist manifestations of the people (anarchist not so much in the political meaning, but in that of human behavior), joy, fervor, light-heartedness, sex, bravado» and with

«their natural environment, the periphery of the city or the dark and dirty alleys of the ancient neighborhoods, with their protagonists, prostitutes, pimps, unemployed, young scoundrels, drunks". I was wrong? Maybe. But you yourself judge "just enough anarchist, humanitarianism, etc." as «irrational elements without which it is difficult to conceive, in this exact historical period, a poetic action».

*Finally, there was the judgment on your political position and that "at least so far" that "painfully" offended you. Here, however, there is a misunderstanding to be clarified. When I wrote: «Now, Pasolini with his books, in his own way, at least until now has tried to lead this battle», I did not at all intend to insinuate the suspicion that you might change front of battle in the more or less near future. Instead, I wanted to argue with those, both on the right and on the left, who are annoyed by your success (and there are many of them as you know very well) who tend to shift their judgment onto spurious elements: that is, on the data of your biography which has been widely seized upon by magazines, photographers , cinematographers and social reporters. You yourself, in «Vie Nuove», had to respond to a letter that posed problems of this kind: and you did very well. I wanted to reiterate that up to now the objective data on which to base a judgment are your political positions and your work as a writer: not others. If that "at least so far" is open to misunderstandings, this statement of mine should serve as clarification.*

*However, the alleged offense does not justify the trial of intentions (this is truly sectarian!) that you make towards my criticism, it does not justify the fact that you do not use towards me that method which you rightly expect to be used in yours: of objectively evaluating what that I wrote. And it doesn't justify that insinuation that I didn't want to respond to criticisms directed at the PCI (because then, if it was worth it?) and that reference to the XX and XXI Congresses of the PCUS - events that engage the consciences of millions and millions of men - as a polemical expedient, almost moral blackmail, in these little skirmishes of ours. In short, an irritated and insufficiently reasoned response. Effect, I hope, of a touchy character. With unchanged friendship.*

*Carlo Salinari*

Let's review the "issues on the table".

I) Ideology of the poet. I'm happy that you see that we agree: you are laconic, I am verbose, we would say the same thing. Very good! What

matters to me is that you acknowledge that the matter is "complex", and that, in any case, the ideology of a poet is not only his political ideology (so if his political ideology may present weak points, his ideology tout court can be ironclad). I care, I say, as far as I'm concerned, in our controversy. My "populism" (a strictly political error) should not be called upon to explain the political gaps in my book, therefore... or, at least, with less mechanicalness... And so anarchism etc.

II) The crisis told in my book of verses. No, it's not what you say (between people as conscience and people as spontaneity: this was typical of my other book, or a moralistic insurgency (my irritation against a certain hypocrisy of the left: for which there is a tendency to attenuate, classically reality: it is called "mistake of the past", euphemistically, the Stalinist tragedy etc.). It is the having avoided the discussion on these points that I reproach you for...Gramsci's ashes, and it can be considered my chronic illness) . The religion of my time expresses the crisis of the 1960s... The neo-capitalist siren on the one hand, revolutionary desistance on the other: and the void, the terrible existential void that follows. When political action weakens, or becomes uncertain, then one feels the desire to escape, to dream ("Africa, my only alternative")

III) The poetic rendering of my book. I shouldn't judge. But the best points of The Religion are certainly not the ones you indicate. The most naive readers (witness this, for example, from many letters from readers of «Vie Nuove») have understood this. You were wrong, you were wrong, dear Salinari. There is not a relevant point in the book that describes the sub-proletarian, sordid and lively world of which you speak: bringing grist, without wanting it, to the mill of the defamers of the fascist and bourgeois press. Coincidentally, the best points of the book The Religion of My Time, Part I, A Light, A Boy, Anger, The Wisteria, are all poems that describe either Friuli, or the bourgeois neighborhoods of Rome, where one can physically and visually placing totally internal dramas, which have nothing to do with that "creature" realism (Auerbach) of which you speak, insisting on making me a figure dear to the "Mirror".

IV) I take great pleasure in your clarification of "at least so far". Indeed, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, if your intention was to defend me against "spurious judgements". You know very well that my worldly life does not exist, it is a total invention of the right-wing press. I work all day, and when I'm not working I'm alone. My friends are few. On the other hand,

I know that the power of the press is immense. Even the most sincere person, seeing a photograph of me that shows me in Via Veneto, tends to think that I am always there. The thought doesn't even occur to him that I may have passed by there by chance, to buy a foreign newspaper (which happens, sometimes). I am convinced that you yourself - given that unfortunately we rarely see each other - have some mythical ideas about me! For example, when you call me "touchy". You're crazy? It may be that he is a little distressed, and therefore tends to dramatize things. (But is it possible that no one can put themselves in someone else's shoes for at least a moment? Put yourself in my shoes for a bit, and try to existentialistically understand the experience of someone who is systematically, regularly, atrociously mystified: you, the pieces of the press bourgeois against me, you see them casually, at times, and maybe they amuse you... But it's another thing to read every day, every hour, false news about yourself, a ferocious malice, a shameless transformation of data, a contempt collectivized, made commonplace...)

But I don't want to complain. However, allow me, you and my other friends, to at least get angry sometimes.

not. 45, November 16, 1961

## MARXISM AND RELIGIOUSITY

*Dear Pasolini, if you allow me, I would like to give my answer to the question you posed to the worker Siviero and the group of Cremonese. Why must we necessarily talk about "motions of conscience" and "betrayals of one's social class"? Don't you think, Pasolini, that just the fact that you consider yourself bourgeois educated and a traitor to your social class is a negative movement in his conscience? Forgive me if I began to answer by asking in turn, but I believe that at a given point in life every human being has "motivations": those who embrace a different faith, those who take up a new job, and even those who kill to change their social status.*

*For this reason many people suffer, and I believe in His sacrifices, in His sacrifices; but in my opinion it is not, I repeat, a positive thing, I think it simply arises from human weakness, from the need for a goodness that has not yet been found, from disappointment... Not from the wrong bourgeois education. I believe, perhaps childishly, that there is only one social class in the world.*

*Sorry if I don't agree with you, although I sincerely admire you for your struggle in life.*

*L. C. G. - Genova*

*Dear Pasolini, I would like to tell you my opinion regarding the important question you asked the worker Siviero and the group of Cremonese. I am a young university student, of bourgeois origin, Marxist, not a member of the PCI. In my opinion, the most accurate political qualification to give to the middle and small bourgeoisie is not that of capitalists, but of "lackeys" of capitalism. And since it is not a given that someone who is born a slave must die a slave, it seems logical to me that even a bourgeois can make his own those ideals of political freedom and a classless society, that is, without masters, which are typical of communist ideology. Otherwise we would have to admit that the bourgeois must all be fascists; but the Resistance has demonstrated that not everyone appreciates subservience to the interests of the bosses.*

*I think I can conclude that the "betrayal" of the bourgeoisie, as far as I'm concerned, is due to necessity. humanism of wanting a society of free men where the merits of each are rightly evaluated. Here it is certainly not a question of taking up the weapons of revolt in defense of the working and peasant classes, but of defending one's own concrete human and scientific interests. At the basis of the conversion to Marxism by a bourgeois are therefore, in addition to clarity and depth of vision of history, concrete interests, even if then sublimated into ideals.*

*Best regards.*

*Francesco Marò - via Boncompagni, Rome*

*Dear Pasolini, I like the question with which you concluded your "dialogues" on issue no. 44 of «Vie Nuove». I also place myself among those who at a certain moment in life have decided to "betray". I have been considered the black (red) sheep of the family since January 1947, when I joined the Communist Party. Before, I was from Catholic Action because my whole family was, and those left in the world still are, from Catholic Action. I arrived at this decision after much reflection. Why did I decide to "betray"? Personally, excuse me, I believe I am continuing what was my vocation when with all sincerity I was convinced that by praying I would contribute to solving all the distortions of this world. Except that what I thought I had before was too abstract a conscience, I understand it now, a*

*dozen, a non-conscience, hypocrisy, in a nutshell. But I was in good faith and the others, the usual ones, took advantage of it. This is why when I realized I had been cheated I rebelled, I am rebelling, I will always rebel so that other kids who are in the same conditions as me today understand how I understood.*

*I don't know if I managed to explain myself well, I only have fifth grade despite the presumption of becoming a writer like you. I write poems, short stories, I also wrote a novel and I'm writing another on the topic of the scam mentioned above. And the sacrifices are precisely the entertainment, the necessary sleep, the little rest. I have also been married for eight years and I have a magnificent little girl who I hope to raise as I would have preferred them to raise me too.*

*Tino Ramelli - via Di Giovanni 4, Piacenza*

I think these are the first of a fairly long series of letters. I am happy about it because this topic of the relationship between Christianity and Marxism, in its generic nature, in its breadth, and, if we want, in its absurdity, lends itself to a large number of observations and excursus.

Observe in all three of these letters - in the one, a little rough, signed L. C. G., most likely a worker, in the one, a little conformist, by the young university student Marò, and in the one, expert and elegant, by Tino Ramelli (in which I sense, as he hopes, writing skills) - observe how in all these three letters a kind of "naturalness" can be found in explaining the betrayal of the bourgeois (Catholic) who becomes Marxist: a "naturalness" that tends to lighten, or even, to unravel the problem.

In the first letter we find precisely what is called a tautology: that is, an explanation of the thing with the thing. Why does one become a Marxist? Because he becomes a Marxist. Why is there a movement of conscience that pushes someone to "betray" his social class? Because "riots" have always been there and always will be. Well no! There is nothing that can be explained by just being there. Many times, indeed, almost always, natural things are the most complicated, the most common symptoms the most significant.

This "motion" - so simple if seen "after" - is, in its phenomenology, a very complex fact: like all mystical or ascetic acts. I don't want to use too big words, and I don't want to be misunderstood. It must be taken into account that at this moment I have this "motion" under the microscope, isolated from everything that comes before and everything that comes after:

and therefore in my eyes it takes on a kind of disproportion. Mystical or ascetic act, I said: and it is so. Because, once the transition has been completed, there is no longer, on a historical and logical level, any possibility of exchange or comparison between bourgeois Christianity and Marxism. I don't want there to be any misunderstandings about this. In the ideal moment - which is always, ideally, graduated - in which one passes from one state to another, he denies his entire previous state: therefore he denies himself, as the product of a historical period or of a culture: and this denial, palingenetic, in itself, is ascetic.

I was saying that the "motion of conscience" that leads to the betrayal of one's social class is graduated: it generally has (the continuation is up to the reader ad libitum) some subsequent secondary moments: the heretical moment (an accentuation of evangelism as pure religion against state religion, official, conformist; or an accentuation of "Protestant" moralism); the anarchist moment (which is a general protest against the preconstituted, established state of things that have become unbearably impersonal and suffocating); the humanitarian moment (which channels the first two moments into a first form of action, making them dynamic towards others). All these three moments have in common the fact of being "religious": that is, of being predominantly irrational, loving, imbued with piety.

Whoever completes these three moments to the end - always in an ideal period, which can last a day, a year, a decade - will find himself, with his own strength, driven by his own non-conformist restlessness, ripe for Marxism. Which, I repeat and underline, is a leap in quality. In it, "religiosity" loses every historical characteristic - irrationalism, individualism, metaphysical perspectivism - to acquire entirely new characteristics: rationalism, sociality, secular perspectivism.

In the act in which someone makes this "qualitative leap" he is not yet a Marxist: there is therefore a moment of emptiness, in which, if he moves, he still moves due to that push of "love" that two thousand years of imitatio Christi - ouch, how betrayed! -, they taught him. "Later" the matter will be explained Marxistically: as the student Marò explains it in this letter of his, more or less. «After», everything will be explained Marxistically, because it is another culture, another totally new point of view.

However, I would like to add one thing. Nothing ever dies in a lifetime. Everything survives. We, together, live and survive. So too every culture is always interwoven with survivals. In the case we are now examining, what

survives are those famous two thousand years of imitatio Christi, that religious irrationalism. They no longer make sense, they belong to another world, denied, rejected, surpassed: yet they survive. They are historically dead but humanly alive elements that make us up. It seems to me that it is naive, superficial, biased to deny or ignore its existence. For me, I am anticlerical (I'm not afraid to say it!), but I know that there are two thousand years of Christianity in me: with my ancestors I built Romanesque churches, and then Gothic churches, and then Baroque churches : they are my heritage, in content and style. I would be crazy if I denied this powerful force that is in me: if I left the monopoly of Good to the priests.

not. 47, November 30, 1961

## FASCISM AS A DRUG

*Dear Mr. Pasolini, I would like to clarify some points of what I wrote to you previously. I wanted to point out that the principles of God, Homeland, Family, which you call "taboo" are the foundations on which every human society is based, including the communist one. It may well be that someone exploits these values, but they exist independently of Fiat, Pirelli, or whatever. The fascist who fell for his ideal of his homeland did not fall for Fiat, Montecatini, Pirelli, just as I don't want to believe that the Russian communist who fell for his homeland died exclusively to serve the interests of a dominant clique. There is no doubt, in fact, that the hegemonic groups of the Kremlin have used the feelings of homeland, family, etc., rooted in the soul of the Russian people, to defend their dominance, in the same way as Western monopolistic groups.*

*Reasoning in this way, moreover, we arrive at the logical conclusion that no ideal is worth dying for, since it is only "deceptions" devised by a few clever people, to the detriment of the many fools who believe in them. And perhaps this version is not too far from the truth.*

*Paolo Castruccio - Genoa*

There is a sentence in your letter, dear Castruccio, which makes me like you: «Reasoning in this way, moreover, one arrives at the logical conclusion that no ideal is worth dying for, since it is only a question of "mirrors for the larks" devised by a few cunning people for their exclusive advantage, and to the detriment of the many who believe in them. And perhaps this version is not too far from the truth."

And this bitterness of his, this discouragement of his, this lucid and offended pessimism of his, which gives to his psychology - at least as it can be glimpsed from afar through a simple exchange of letters - that something painfully noble: the "fiasco of vin", the bravado, the idiotic virilism, the camaraderie that denies any possibility of concentration and confidentiality (almost feminine sides of man), the hatred, the lack of problematic nature, the direct targets, the a prioriism that hides its conformism under a mask of "youthful" violence, etc.: vulgarity, in short, which cannot be fascist. You perhaps know the fascists better than me, let's say, in their "cenesthesis"

Pain, uncertainty, are never vulgar. And in this, I say, you are not fascist (if not in your stubborn, almost self-destructive will, if not in a contradictory need to cling to something, precisely, decisive and violent, and blasphemous, perhaps, in your traditional cults which have become pure pretexts).

See? That "trauma" of his childhood, of his adolescence, which I had intuited in his first letter, appears even clearer here: his excess of sensitivity, his indiscriminate need to believe, and therefore, his predisposition to discouraging disappointments.

Experience teaches me that traumas of this type - generally, in the clinical sense, these are "anxiety neuroses" - tend to lead to a dissociation from the full act of life: that is, they tend to make one look at life pessimistically, sub specie aeternitatis: all young adolescent poets look at life like this, they feel "Leopardian". If this anxiety worsens, then we have real neurosis: the patient definitively detaches himself from life, defeated, disintegrated, filled to the point of the most atrocious nausea with a sense of absolute "uselessness". But anxiety rarely becomes a real illness. It haunts sensitive people (of which there are many) all their lives. It is a subtle evil, which gives continuous suffering, a continuous temptation to neglect, to give up: to anticipate the fatal clause of death.

She is evidently in this state of mind. And this is why she so tenaciously clings to something that seems vital to her: fascism as a drug.

The consequence of all this is the tendency of the "anxious" to abolish the notion of history. All pessimism is metahistorical. The obsessive sense of death and uselessness undermines the foundations not only of life as vitality, but also of life as rationality (even more so!), that is, as history. The shepherd wandering around Asia sees transience not only in the most

everyday and miserably human acts, but also in the most superbly intellectual ones...

And the anxious man is then proud of his ennobling sense of death, almost as if it were a patent of superiority over other men immersed in doing or thinking: he, so detached from doing and thinking...

So you see: here's what your (proud) "metahistoricism" gets you: in your letter you speak of "Homeland", "Family", "God", as if these were notions totally outside of history, immutable and unalterable categories. Therefore we cannot understand each other: because when I spoke of Homeland, Family and God, I spoke of strictly historical notions: I was not speaking of the Duchy of Parma or the Kingdom of Naples, but of Italy in the early twentieth century, I was not speaking of the Roman-type family or Muslim, but from the European petty-bourgeois family of the 20th century, I was not talking about the God of Saint Augustine or Saint Francis, but of the God of the Counter-Reformation. It is these historical notions that are classist pretexts. Excuse me, what does a large industry do with an ideal homeland? The homeland that interests it is the one that consumes its products. It is this homeland that it idealizes! And excuse me, what does a great landowner do with the God of a mystic? The God that interests him is the ecclesiastical, conformist, dogmatic God, who helps him to leave the institutions and the relationships between master and servant as they are. This is the God he idealizes! etc.

Having established this, it is obvious that, as long as man is the man he is (how long he will be, neither you nor I can say: mass civilization is upon us), they will have the right of citizenship in his sentimental horizon, the father and mother, the land where he was born, the religious mystery. But tell me, are these entities politically defensible? Why do Russians, communists, love their homeland and family and (when they believe in it) God, more than Italians? Is there a need for fascism to defend these facts of human doing and thinking, understood in an eternal and sentimental sense, as you seem to understand them?

Because, in a historical and institutional sense, they are evidently "taboos": I repeat it. And don't keep your feet on two stirrups: one foot on history and one on metahistory. This Homeland, this Family, this God are pretexts to perpetuate an unjust society: they are criminal hypocrisies.

And mind you, none of us are against what you call basic principles that pre-exist any structure. Only that we want a homeland where there are no

exploiters and exploited, where the ruling class does not lead in the name of hypocrisy and cynicism, in the most total administrative corruption: and we want a family where the rights of male and female are equal, where the patria potestas is a memory of barbaric times, where divorce gives the possibility of resolving often inhuman situations; and finally we want a God who does not serve, for example, to justify the censorship of films like Don't Kill...

And be persuaded that the fallen fascists fell precisely - and I say this with all my pity - for false ideals, for the pretexts of power: even if they deluded themselves, as you delude yourself, into fighting for a homeland in itself , an absolute homeland. It is this illusion, moreover, that in most cases saves and purifies them.

Now, when you yourself talk about Russia, you talk about "cliques" or "hegemonic groups"; I don't believe that such "cliques" or "hegemonic groups" have ever ideologically founded power on the concept of homeland! It would have been perfectly useless. The Homeland now coincided, for the Russian fighter, with the ideal Homeland: it was her society, in a sentimental and aesthetic aspect... Rather, I want to point out your terminology. For Italy you speak of "classes", for Russia you speak instead of "cliques" and "groups...". Here is the enormous, immeasurable difference. In the face of which even his pessimism, his sense of uselessness can only allow for a possibility of discussion... Class is a social concretion that has the "fatal" characteristics of inheritance, immutability, inevitability : there are no tools to move it other than those of the revolution. It is a kind of hereditary, infectious disease, which only a difficult operation can cure, substantially changing the sick individual. The "clique" or "hegemonic group" have none of the typical characteristics of the class: they are evils, more or less serious, that society has a way of controlling and curing - after perhaps having suffered for a long time. This is the case of Stalinism. History will always be a long, contradictory, complex struggle for man. Once social classes have been abolished, it is clear that new problems and new needs will arise: society will never be a community of ants... It is ridiculous that, out of preventive fear of a "hegemonic group", the "class" is allowed to flourish , with the state of injustice that it implies. Don't you think so?

(And look, I am not a recent anti-Stalinist: I always have been. And I leave you every inventory benefit.)

(And remember, again, that I love my country immensely: if you have the patience to read my poetry books, from the first of '42 to the last of '61, you will see this love expressed on every page.)

n. 48, 7 December 1961

## BERNARDINO, BROTHER OF BENEDETTO

*Dear Pasolini, I learned of your latest troubles, I read the news reported by the press, including F. Calderoni's report in the «Tempo» rotogravure, including the reportages all full of insinuations and subtexts from the tabloid newspapers, and in the end I, who I am a sincere admirer of yours, I must reproach you: your self-defensive position is inappropriate and inadequate. In my opinion, she shouldn't have defended herself, and with such a resigned and resigned tone to boot. In this way, the resulting impression is that you feel disarmed, almost prey to an inferiority complex. The caustic and biting Pasolini who with four concise and tight arguments demolishes D'Annunzio, who with a ruthless (and warm with humanity) investigation lays bare historical ugliness and absurdities, unmasks hypocrisy and conformism, wavers and wavers now in the face of a any Bernardino, brother of Benedetto? I also didn't like his Parisian statements, imbued with an evangelical spirit. In the interview given to Calderoni you even appear doubtful whether this is an episode to be included in the campaign orchestrated against you! Of course she is! You know well that you are one of the most hated people in Italy, by certain opinion groups: you are hated first and foremost by those failed writers who cannot resign themselves to your success; you are hated by the brute and irrational passion of the fascists, by the servile grayness of the so-called right-thinking people. You look for her persecutors among them and nail them to the wall: you don't lack the means.*

*I understand your bitterness and your polemical disarmament, in the face of so much perfidy, but realize that this is a fight to survive. These people will not give her any respite until they have destroyed her. The most indulgent of them bring up Villon, Angiolieri, Cellini, Verlaine, Rimbaud. I don't know if you like these combinations: for me, they can be edifying after death, but not when you are still enjoying "the sweet lome".*

*Prof. Decio Buzzetti - Conselice (Ravenna)*

Yes, dear and true friend: I waver and hesitate before any Bernardino, brother of Benedetto. What should I do against him? Hate him? There is no proportion between that miserable creature and hatred. I just can't do it. My lawyers, like you, tend to assume that it is a "buy": and there is evidence to support this. For example, I will tell you something - a small detail - that until now it has never occurred to me to say, in the statements that have been requested of me. The day after my arrival in Circeo, I stopped in front of the famous shop-trattoria: I still hadn't identified the local restaurants (in Circeo, I was working in a private villa, where naturally, I couldn't make food for myself. ..), and I thought they ate there. Benedetto (at least I suppose it was him) was lounging in the sun in his apron. I asked him if we were eating in his sunny place. He looked at me and denied it. They ate there only on Sundays, in winter. I left, saying goodbye to him: I looked for my meal elsewhere, in the unpleasant-splendid Silver Bay. I had been seen, therefore. And after all, for about two weeks, I passed there at least twice a day, always before and after meals, with my unhappy Giulietta. That afternoon (I was alone, my collaborator, Sergio Citti, sometimes went off for, as they say in Rome, a nap), I stopped to drink a Coca-Cola.

So everything can be supported. But my first reaction, as soon as I learned of the complaint (it was the day of the premiere in Rome of my Accattone) is that Bernardino, Benedetto's brother, is simply a poor creature in the throes of a neurosis: I use neurosis to indicate with a generic clinical term however, a pathological form of the psychology of the young person. The terms in which he dictated the report to the police have all the characteristics of hallucination. They look like they were written for a manual. You think: I would have been dressed all in dark (while wearing a light reindeer jacket), I would have had a hat on my head (in my whole life I have never put a hat on my head even to try it on, except for two or three weeks in 1938 in Bologna...), I would have put on black gloves, and I would have pulled out a gun and tried to get closer to the drawer. There will be someone in Conselice who knows a little about psychology. Ask him what he thinks... Does it seem possible to you that some fascist suggested such madness to that poor creature?

However, when in doubt - or bought or hallucinated - for me it's the same thing. I feel moments of exasperation (which I'll let you imagine) against him: but I can't get really angry. I repeat, there is no proportion. The object of my possible anger or protest is a miserable Bernardino who doesn't exist:

he is nothing more than a growl, an echolalia, an uncontrolled thirst for who knows what revenge...

One day I was walking through a small town in India: it was a terrible suburb, sunk in the last lights of the sunset. Some were chatting, some were already sleeping on the ground, on the fetid stones, some had the strength to joke, wrapped in his white rags. I was returning to the hotel, all lost, outside, in that atrociously Leopardian hour on the edge of Agra, and all lost, inside, trying to poetically fix those images. It happened suddenly. Something grabbed me by the heel, and immediately loosened its grip: I just had time to turn around, with my hair standing on end: it was a dog, a small black dog, sick, mad, desperate, hungry, furious. He bit me, luckily on the leather of my shoe, and ran away. And as he ran away, he continued to bark at me, with obstinate, possessed fury.

Why had he bitten me? She approached me slowly, unseen: I hadn't made a gesture, a step, I hadn't said a word. He had bitten me treacherously, without even a canine reason... No one around moved: the inhabitants of Agra were used to their dogs... Terror makes you evil. The weakness is ferocious. Deprivation wicked. Indian dogs, I say. But Christians too, sometimes: when atavistic terror (millennia of malaria, for example, and of armed bandits, and of robberies - even recent ones), weakness and deprivation coincide.

I have never written an epigram against the Indian dog, and I will never write one against Bernardino De Santis and his family.

But I will write against those truly responsible for this case: the editors and journalists of «Tempo» and the other fascist newspapers. I will write, and I have already written. Some verses, of course. Writing verses is not as easy as writing an article. For many reasons... One of these is that the articles written on the Circeo incident are totally based on nothing, and therefore written in complete and conscious bad faith: while the verses in response had to (and will have to) be based on my total presence, on the physical concreteness of an act of anguish, indignation and anger, and have been written (and will be written) in absolute and essential good faith.

You can read these verses either in some literary magazine (for example, «Paragone»), or in volume: in my next volume, which already has a title: The persecution (a title which moreover dates back to this summer: the Circeo it still didn't fit). I hope that then you will change your mind about

my reaction which you call "resigned and resigned". It's a question of method, right?

Or would he like me to put myself on their level? Those who say they defend their family and act as slanderers, those who say they love their country and act as blackmailers, those who say they believe in God and act as snitches do not deserve to be spoken to, not even through lawyers.

Ah, the sweet lome! Yes, yes, you are right: as long as you still enjoy the sweet lome it is good to have a good reputation, but it is precisely the sweet lome that makes you live according to reason and according to passion... Did you understand the litany?

I will never give up anything for reputation. I hope that those who are my friends, or personal friends, or as readers, or as comrades in the fight (and in whose eyes, I know, a shadow falls every time my reputation is at stake: a shadow that gives me terrible pain) are so critical, so rigorous, so pure, that they do not allow themselves to be affected by the contagion of scandal: if this were the case, they would be the losers: if only they gave in for a moment and gave even the slightest value to their enemies' campaign, they they would play into the hands of their enemies. We don't fight only in the squares, in the streets, in the workshops, or with speeches, with writings, with verses: the hardest fight is the one that takes place in the depths of consciences, in the most delicate sutures of feelings. I have nothing to do, neither psychologically, nor biographically, nor stylistically with the poets, even great ones, that you cited: only the fascist monster can suggest similar hypotheses. And he will suggest them. But by listening to them, you do nothing but waste time and dignity.

n. 51, 28 December 1961

# 1962

## SINCERITY AND MORE

*Dear Pasolini, I am a twenty-year-old boy from a remote village in "African" Italy. Giacomo Devoto, in «Terzo programma» (n. 2, 1961), spoke about you in very flattering terms. I would like to ask you what linguistic criteria you used for the transformation of the institutional language, prosaic and traditional, into poetry-language. Then an explanation, Devoto claims that dialect solutions "presuppose a relationship of optimism, intimacy and trust", while slang ones presuppose "a state of mind of pessimism, technicality and distrust". Why?*

*Santo Gangemi - Archi (Reggio Calabria)*

Oh, it is very difficult, nay, impossible, for me to answer your question. That everyone is a poet is demonstrated by a recent book, published by Einaudi, Autobiographies of light: a collection of four five long memoirs, in which sub-proletarians from the Po Valley at the beginning of the century narrate their lives, their marginal, but still essential and unrepeatable, passage on earth. If you want to read that book you will come across fragments of pure poetry. How was it born? Eh, the discussion would be long... The fact is that there is. And the authors are not poets: they are just ordinary poor creatures, such as can be found in hundreds of thousands on the streets.

I, on the other hand, would be a "poet" with all the paperwork in order, with all the necessary aesthetic awareness. But there is something diabolical in poetry, you can see it, dear boy from "African" Italy... I have already repeated it often in this column of mine; there is something in the stylistic operation that I cannot explain, and I therefore have to fall back on the tautologies of the irrational. I have often invoked the intervention of my critical friends; to pose together the question of the relationship between the irrational and the rational in poetry. But no one has ever understood this appeal of mine: they preferred to intervene against my moments of helpless and naked irrationality, isolating them from the historical context of rationality and irrationality in which a poet and a man, in concrete terms, live.

The ineliminable and almost "involuntary" need to be honest: this can be a fact that can support a writer to "underline that elasticity" that you ask me

about through the Devoto. But I cannot and do not want to insist on this misunderstanding of sincerity. Perhaps inspiration is a chemical process of cenesthesis (psycho-physical balance on which we rest: our vital horizon) so the effect would be a bit like that of a "truth serum". The fact is that when I feel the inspiration to write (and you feel, you feel, this damned inspiration, so romantic, so irrationalistic, so reactionary!) I feel a strong impulse to be sincere, despite everything, against everything. Perhaps this will give the "maximum tension" you ask me about. It costs a lot and costs nothing. Risk is both reward and punishment.

Now, all of this, I repeat, may seem equivocal to you, that is, too much entrusted to an existential instinct. But does this instinct come before or after? Because the whole question can also be posed in absolutely rational terms. That is: inspiration consists of a critical act that continually verifies historical reality in its true and apparent contradictions.

As you can see, the sincerity I was telling you about can be instinctive but also critical: and perhaps reconciling the two acts is not that difficult, just as it is not difficult to reconcile petrol with the engine. But I don't think so, because everything, always, is difficult. Nothing is simply a "fact", to be accepted through common sense. And unfortunately it is through common sense that irrational facts settle into our habits. This is why I prefer to answer you with "I don't know", rather than relying on common sense, when I am not able to give you a philosophical explanation on my own.

(As for the postscript, I should have the entire text of the Devoto before my eyes: but it seems to me that the observations concern the substantial affability or liveliness of the use of dialect, as a "family" language, while "jargon" is a defense: it is used by the clans to not be understood, out of "distrust", in fact, towards those who listen.)

n. 11, 15 March 1962

## EVERYONE'S ADVENTURE

Dear Pasolini, I read in the previous issue of «Vie Nuove», in one of your replies, some lines that alluded to a book entitled: Autobiographies of light; These lines have intrigued me, and I would like to know something more. Best regards.

*S.P. - Agrigento*

Yes, the Autobiographies of Light are an extremely interesting book (perhaps more from an aesthetic than sociological point of view) edited by a sociologist, Danilo Montaldi, for Einaudi. These are five sub-proletarian autobiographies collected for documentary purposes: to document a section of life in the countryside of Lower Lombardy in a phase of transition from one historical period to another. And, on this, the curator's long introduction is exhaustive. The book matters to me, I repeat, as a "literary case".

Are these autobiographies therefore a case of "descent" culture? In a way, at least mechanically, yes. It is clear that they would not have been born if there had not been a direct sociological solicitation, the request for a document. But even if the inspiration to give the document had been autonomous, the link with the "higher" culture can only be considered direct (for example the readings done in prison): and it would be, in this case, a paraliterary work that Bertolucci, Siciliano and I could very well consider for the second twentieth-century episode of our Writers of Reality.

However, whether these autobiographies can be assigned to a pure popular culture, or to a semi-cultured culture, they are certainly a very new phenomenon: a true stylistic revolution.

You know that the main characteristic of popular literature is "fixation": I described this characteristic, without parsimony, in my introduction to Italian popular poetry. I don't feel like repeating myself, not even briefly. I will brutally state how: the popular poet has no capacity for stylistic innovation, and his inventions, however poetic, however splendid, never revolutionize his metric, linguistic, melodic tradition codified once and for all.

But did the popular poet have a prose tradition? No, certainly (except for the fairy tale). And so here we are with this absolutely modern popular phenomenon which is the autobiographies of the light and similar. Here the popular poet is forced to invent outside the stylistic canon: because telling, albeit magmatically, has its own internal regulation, as you know well. It is a closed form, however open it may appear... The prisoner, the criminal, the prostitute who are preparing for the memorial find themselves faced (albeit unconsciously) with formal problems. And they must resolve them without having before their eyes the codified form down to its most intimate structures of their own tradition, as happened with the inventors of ditties, funeral songs, biojghe, villotte, etc. etc.

In short, it is a question of creating a genre, unknown to popular culture: vaguely prefigured by bourgeois culture.

Are they therefore "spoken autobiographies"? I wouldn't say so. The recorder doesn't seem to have anything to do with it here. Here the speaker-writer seems to me to be fully aware of that something special, which is the "re-enactment of his own life": and he puts it all into this myth in which he exalts, slyly, or pathetically, with applied moralism, the the adventure of one's passage on earth. And, from here, the awareness of that something special that is the stylistic operation also arises. Precisely to be put at the service of that evocation of one's life as a fact albeit humbly unrepeatable, and perhaps even ineffable.

Poetry, which is the devil, does not need too complex consciences to put its tail behind it: this "consciousness of something special" that I have brutally proposed here is enough for it. Then the normative, normative, normalizing language rises: goodbye norm. Here are the expressive points, the lively points, the allusiveness, the metaphor. There are passages in these autobiographies of memorable poetry: certain navigations on the Po, certain suburban interiors... Stupendous things.

There are people not only from the bourgeois intellectual aristocracy, but also communists, who persist in considering people like these who have dictated their autobiographies, as non-existent, as non-speaking, as not present: little more than beasts, in short, devoid of spirit. There is nothing that outrages me more than such a condemnation, which cannot be appealed. The smile of boredom and compassion that twists the bourgeois lips of these intellectuals, bourgeois or communists, in speaking of the irrecoverable sub-proletarians is the indicator of a profound error, of a real aberration: the idea that history flows on a single layer. But the story is thick, it runs through multiple layers! And the spirit is nothing but the semantic coincidence of the individual with history. A cultured bourgeois or communist man, with all his conscience and his problems, can be totally unreal: that is, he can be a case of pathology of the spirit. While one of these sub-proletarian memoirists, without conscience and without educated problems, can fully grasp the coincidence I was saying: and with the solid arguments of a very lucid and concrete poetry, fully represent a human "case" in the lower but no less significant strata of the our time.

n. 12, March 22, 1962

# THE IDEA OF BEING A PRIVILEGED

*Mr Pasolini, I would like you to know the opinion of a student who, despite being a bad Catholic, would aspire to become a good Christian. I believe that the reform of society must take place both through the push of the masses and through individual redemption. I believe that we need to help, claim, educate. Educating is more than instructing. I made this imperfect speech to get to a point: the young man and love. The young person must be educated in love and, above all, educated, because I believe, in my little experience, that love is not simply a se coucher, but something more. I believe that the essence of love is also here in altruism, in respect for the loved one, who is also loved flesh. The birth of love is instinctive, immediate. The engagement is the necessary interval, which will allow the two to get to know each other better, to understand each other, to break up. Today there is not much time for love. We get it.*

*we like each other, we break up. This is what you read in your books, this is the reality. But this, which you illustrate, is not love but its substitute, perversion, selfishness. Lenin was also of the same opinion as me. Then there are the two commandments: do not commit impure acts and do not desire other people's wives, your works scare the bourgeois and you believe you are committed and true communists. Stir up the mud instead. And we young people need to be educated. Instead you stir up the mud, perhaps to demonstrate that bourgeois society is putrid. But we must also propose solutions and illustrate hopes. Do you know that the communist is an optimist and that his pessimism is a petty-bourgeois residue? You wrote that a writer must represent reality as it is, hard and raw without hypocrisy or falsification. I say that today reality must be based on a moral level.*

*Giovanni Petti - via dei Faggi, Rome*

Dear boy, who knows how many times I have passed, along Via dei Faggi, along your neighbours' houses, among groups of your friends, in the sunny squares of Centocelle, in sight of Quarticciolo and Borgata Gordiani!

I know everything about your life. The one that takes place around you, and, up to a certain point, the one that takes place inside you. I know what the psychological mechanism is that makes you desire, with authentic passion, a more aristocratic level than the one in which you live socially and physically: that triggers in you the "ennoblement" of that world of feelings that seems vulgar to you, that brooding in you, the ancient,

unshakable, irrefutable stilnovism of the twenty years! In the meantime, I would bet that something about your age differentiates you from your other peers in Centocelle: a northern (or southern) father or mother, a lower-middle-class economic level, perhaps with a more brilliant past - because of that father or mother. , an aspiration for an even more dignified type of bourgeois life... It is clear, therefore, how your "ennobling operation" takes place along the fatal inclined plane of conformism... Even if you know that you shouldn't be conformists! What a modern student you would be if you didn't know this. But you know it in words. Your non-conformism is, I would say, not in the ideas and expressions of your letter - which are all conformist, some to the point of involuntary hypocrisy - but in the "tone", in that little bit of the irrational that pushes you to want, desperately to want that "ennoblement"...

You are a bourgeois: and, in your particular case, you should hear, in this word, an accusation. Because what contradicts you in your ennobling operation, in your naive erotic idealism of twenty-year-olds, is precisely and only the bourgeoisie. Which is greedy, petty, hypocritical, selfish, and, yes!, vulgar.

I'm not saying that even communists can't be vulgar, but they are to the extent that they are influenced by the bourgeois world: the aspiration to the frigidaire is intimately vulgar, television optimism is very vulgar... And it doesn't mean that humble workers communists do not give in partially, on the surface, to this apostolate of vulgarity. But essentially they are not vulgar: because it is only possession and the idea of possession that makes one vulgar. Behind your very delicate, idealistic, sensitive letter, there is a terrible base of vulgarity: the idea of being privileged.

You, in your letter, do nothing but reiterate your superiority - the minimum economic superiority, and the significant spiritual superiority - over those who you consider vulgar, because they are rude, simple, violent or rude. You wanted to impart a lesson on what love is for a beautiful soul. The beautiful soul is yours: therefore I tell you, my Christian boy, that, without wanting it, you have sinned of presumption.

To what extent are we responsible for what we do "without wanting to"? Oh, a lot. You, for example, reached your act of involuntary presumption through an act for which you are fully responsible: the lack of information. The literary appreciations from which you start are completely baseless: your judgment on the way in which the sexual problem is treated in modern

writers (among whom you include me) is entirely hoaxed, based on the self-interested and hypocritical judgment of others. You have not read the texts you are talking about, or you have only read them in part, or you have read them badly, that is, not with your head. Do you feel responsible for this? Put your hand on your heart and answer yourself.

(I responded more to the substance of your letter - to the letter that perhaps you don't know you wrote - than to the particular problems you pose to me. But, in responding to these, I should give some obvious answers: for example: of course love is one thing and eros another, of course "reality must be based on a moral level" etc. etc.! But why do you want to make me say banalities? Write to me again in a year, when you have read more and thought more, and, maybe, more made to love...)

n. 13, March 29, 1962

## DISCOVERY OF TOMMASINO

Dear Pasolini, I was in a sanatorium for a long time and unfortunately I know what problems are still unsolved in the anti-tuberculosis field. But I had never seen an open denunciation of this serious plague that still exists in Italy as you did in your film A Violent Life. Until now, sanatoriums had always been talked about only to make readers cry, perhaps by saying that this disease (sometimes called "subtle disease") was a noble disease reserved for gentlemen (see The Lady of the Camellias and other novels of the genre). Instead you, on the contrary, have made many people aware of things that a large majority of citizens do not know. Things that are currently being recorded, namely young people who, having been discharged because they have recovered, try to return to the sanatoriums because they eat there. Once upon a time people went to a sanatorium to die. Today, however, many are forced to hospitalize again in order to get by. And here is your complaint rightly: the police beat up and arrest the patients when they ask for better treatment, while on the other side there are families who don't even have a home and live in shacks, as happens in every city (Livorno unfortunately still needs of at least 4,000 homes to solve this problem). Therefore, together with thanks for having addressed this problem, I would like to ask you to continue talking about it on «Vie Nuove».

*Nedo Panattoni - via Adriana 29, Livorno*

First of all, sorry for a clarification: the film A Violent Life is not mine. It is the work of two young directors, Brunello Rondi and Paolo Heusch. They are responsible for the high quality of the film. The plot of A Violent Life suddenly emerged to me one evening in '53 or '54, when I was finishing writing Ragazzi di vita. There is a point in Tiburtina, at Pietralata, and just before Tiburtino III and Ponte Mammolo (where I lived at the time), which is called "Forte". There you can see a barracks, a bar, a factory, a bus depot, some barracks, and, behind, a hill, a mangy and infernal hill, the «Monte del Pecoraro» (which I have described many times in my books, and which I will redescribe in the first Canto of my new novel, a Hell, precisely, which is called La Mortaccia).

It was raining, or had just stopped raining. There was a soaked and painful air, with that dark, funereal, too shiny blue that is revealed at the end of the horizon when the weather clears towards evening, and it is now too late.

I was walking in the mud. And there, at the bus stop that turns towards Pietralata, I met Tommaso. His name wasn't Tommaso: but his face was identical to how I later depicted him repeatedly in the pages of A violent life, and he also dressed in the same way: a tattered but "serious" suit, perhaps with a white shirt dirty, and the tie, purple and threadbare. As young Romans often do, he immediately became familiar: and, in a few minutes, he told me his whole story: the episode that I then told in the first chapter, and his illness at Forlanini.

Then he disappeared. I never saw him again. Neither in Pietralata nor in Tiburtino; in any of those miserable streets that surround the City of Dis.

When I reached Forlanini's chapter, I had to read up, because in my entire life I had never seen a hospital except for a few quick visits.

I spoke with two former patients - who would later become two characters in the novel - I spoke with one of the doctors (brother of a communist politician who was a friend of mine), and finally I spoke with some anonymous patients. Five or six days of work. That's all.

As you can see, I am not a specialist in the field of hospitals or sanatoriums: far from it. I don't have what it takes to legally be able to do what you ask me to do.

On the other hand, if you knew how many other requests similar to yours are made to me, from all parts of Italy! A few days ago, a teacher invited me to write about the terrible condition in which elementary schools find

themselves in the South; a young Tuscan miner from Gerfalco invited me to go to the mine where he works, to report the inhuman situation...

But how do I do it? All of you should understand that by describing an Italian "case" of poverty, of injustice, I intend to symbolize, summarize, all other similar cases. Which, I know, are infinite, in the new Italy of well-being which is setting out, with painful boldness, on the road to social democracy (if all goes well!).

My life hasn't changed. I continue to experience an Italy, which, in turn, has not changed. Poverty, indigence, the state of injustice, anxiety, corruption have not decreased at all: on the contrary, they have increased. Talking about well-being (that relative well-being which consists in not dying of hunger, in possessing a minimum of economic dignity!) is an insult. I can't tell you the rush of anger I felt when a French critic, after seeing my Accattone, shrugging his shoulders, with the typical smile of the secular and skeptical liberal, said: «Nothing is true: in Italy now there is well-being." I had to grit my teeth so as not to call him an idiot.

We live in the heart of mystification and hypocrisy. If I were a prophet, I would make very sad prophecies.

n. 15, 12 April 1962

## RESIGNATION AND NON-VIOLENCE

*Dear Pasolini, why did Christ, who had deeply felt, albeit through the sentimental aspect of human solidarity, the progressive and revolutionary cause of the transformation of the slave system of production, not take up the revolutionary message of Spartacus? Wouldn't human redemption now be a fait accompli if Christ had continued Spartacus' act of rebellion? Was Christianity perhaps lacking a conscious and revolutionary basis? It has been said several times that Christianity abolished slavery: but isn't Christianity the tragic ideology of resignation by which the most ignorant and disinherited classes were subdued over the centuries?*

*Alfonso Amato - Casaletta Spartano (Salerno)*

Your letter has an extremely naive side. That is, it presupposes history as a kind of tableau vivant, in which Christ is here, Spartacus is there, Julius Caesar is in a little corner, etc. Each aware of the other's facts; like Grace Kelly, in the mind of a magazine reader, she lives in an ideal sphere together with the emperor of Japan, Eichmann and Rascel. Christ knew

nothing about Spartacus: they belonged to two historical-cultural worlds as distant as the Earth from the Moon.

Having said this, it remains to respond to the less naive part of your letter: the old argument of the "resignation" of Christianity. And so I would like to point out, for the umpteenth time in this column, that Christianity is not one, there are many Christianities: as many as there are human historical periods. Ancient Christianity has nothing to do with medieval Christianity, medieval Christianity is not that of the Renaissance, etc. etc.

Now the resignation of Christ - in a hypothetical modern evangelical interpretation, made by a totally secular and non-believing person like me - is something different from the resignation of Christ as preached by the current Catholic Church: the Church of the Counter-Reformation and of capitalist reaction .

The resignation of the Gospel was powerfully revolutionary in its time (it was the ideology that overthrew an empire based on a slave economy): something like Gandhi's work in modern times. Resignation as non-violence, as meekness, can be a very powerful weapon.

The resignation now disclosed by the Vatican and the Parishes is, however, something monstrous; it is passivity, ignorance, reaction. In reality, Catholics are the opposite of non-violence and meekness. It is enough to read the ferocious, combative, factious articles of the «Osservatore Romano» to be convinced of this.

n. 21, 24 May 1962

## LIKE A CHILDHOOD NIGHTMARE

Dear friends of «Vie Nuove», I had to suspend my column for two or three weeks, because the film Mamma Roma had entered such a phase of work that it left me with no breathing space. Now the dubbing has begun, the effort is less atrocious, I have a few minutes left during the day to write.

A few material minutes, as they say: the psychological minute is rarer. Because Mamma Roma's work is almost a nightmare now. I can't afford to make a mistake in a work; I'm reduced to this. Not making mistakes is a duty I have before enemies and friends: the former would tear me to pieces, the latter would immediately lack a defense weapon against me. I feel that the end of Mamma Roma would be a bit like the end of me. Because there are very few people whose critical judgment is autonomous, based on real cultural reasons: and therefore capable of resisting an author's experiments.

The masses are ruthless. They are like kings. And in front of these kings, now, I'm a bit like a jester who, if he gets a motto wrong, is condemned to death.

You, readers of «Vie Nuove», are among my dearest friends: indeed, the dearest. I realized this yesterday, returning from Latina by car. I had just been sentenced to fifteen days for making an armed threat. I don't know if you know the feelings of those who are innocently accused: or rather, convicted. It is something horrible, which I do not wish on anyone, not even on Bernardino De Santis and his defense lawyer. As a child I remember having two nightmares (due to the beautiful children's literature we feed on as children): being buried alive and being condemned innocent: I thought about it, with the excess of imagination of someone who, since birth, is internally wounded, and I couldn't resist the thought. A sense of revolt, of repugnance, of exasperation that has no equivalent: something that cannot be expressed except in the bestial scream, in the epileptic fury. Now, returning from Latina the other evening, I had this scream and this fury inside me. Dominate yourself, oh, of course, dominate yourself: and immediately reorder yourself, as is now my ancient habit, in thoughts, in an effort to understand: in love, finally.

What hurt me most of all, at that moment, was your thought. As? - I said to myself, with tears in my eyes, biting my fingers - for months, for years I have been repeating, on «Vie Nuove» that I hate weapons and armed people, that I find every form of violence stupid, that I still consider the method of Christ's struggle, which is, today, that of Gandhi: non-violence, meekness, persuasion, I have been repeating this for years, and now someone, or Something terrible, condemns me for armed threat? It is a fact that cannot be tolerated: sooner or later such stupid, blind, inhuman injustice will have to fall on that someone or that Something.

Nothing is more contrary to my nature than violence. Laugh too: but I have done like Tobias a thousand times: I caught a fly, and then I let it go because I didn't have the courage to kill it. Not only have I never owned a gun, but I could swear I've never even touched one, and that I've only seen one once or twice in my life. I have been to India, Africa, even dangerous regions, where going armed may be advisable: not only did I not have a gun in my pocket, but not even a small knife or a penknife.

I don't say this to defend myself from a specific accusation: I make it, as they say, a question of principle. The specific accusation itself is so absurd

that it is not worth talking about.

n. 28, 12 July 1962

## SUFFERING AND HORROR

Dear Pasolini, I am writing to tell you that in some of your latest writings on «Vie Nuove» I seemed to find something wrong in you, that needs to change. Excuse my boldness, but I believe that you suffer too much, in an exaggerated way; after all, if there are those who hate you, there are also those who read you with great satisfaction and are close to you. Listen: I sent your poem To a Pope to two little girls who I taught to do their schoolwork when I was sick. They replied that they made some copies of your poem to read to their schoolmates (they are in the Polesine area and are the daughters of labourers). Tears came to my eyes when I read those lines. These are the future generations who will carry forward our work and our ideals. This is why you would be wrong to get too discouraged, to not also critically examine your own suffering; it is absurd, truly, to suffer so ferociously for poor people who have poisoned brains. Perhaps you will get goosebumps, you who write so well, reading our simple writings, but we love you, so I think you will pity us.

*Aries Zanella*

Yes, you are certainly right. I should have the strength not to talk about my sufferings: my last poems in The Religion of My Time have also been criticized for being too "whiny". Making such a reproach seems a little inhuman to me: but nevertheless I cannot help but take it into consideration. I invoke as my excuse on the one hand the gravity of the shame I suffer, and on the other - and this is what counts - the novelty of him. It's true: a smear campaign is no stranger to the glorious annals of our nation. But it has never happened so radically - as in my case - it seems to me. It is a total mystification of a person that is being attempted: only on a national scale and with a well-defined plan can this be achieved: and this is precisely what the novelty consists of: the almost industrial-type operation of defamation. When, during the Resistance, I was in danger of death or deportation, I never complained: and I am always willing to face any inconvenience and any difficulty for the ideas I am fighting for. If now, sometimes, I suffer too much and too clearly, it is due to the exasperating horror of those who see

themselves coldly, ruthlessly and almost lepidly mystified: the prison, the hardships, the risk are nothing compared to this.

In any case, I can tell you that my recoveries are immediate: I haven't stopped working for an hour, at the job I've been busy with in recent months, and I've already written a long poem on the Latina trial, on the judges and lawyers, on the world that made it not just possible, but conceivable.

n. 31, 2 August 1962

## A JUDGMENT ON CASSOLA

*Dear Pasolini, a few days ago, finding myself in the anteroom of a dentist, I picked up a rotogravure and read an interview with Cassola. The interview was written in a deliberately humorous vein, but it did not hide a polemical undertone and since you were also remembered in the article, I am writing to ask you some questions about this writer.*

The columnist presented Cassola in a detached attitude, with a sweet and sad face, white hair, a type, in short, harmless and far above ordinary mortals: Cassola, however, answered the journalist's questions rather harshly and in a derogatory tone . He deprecated every kind of literature, stating that no book is worth reading since all writers do nothing but write down well-known, obvious and useless things; that certain writers, out of necessity to feel of their time, make it their duty to write at least one novel about the Fiat workers; that a group of young communists had visited him wanting to discuss one of his books and that at the end of the discussion they had accused him of a fascist because he had expressed his opinion in clear words, that is, that he intended to write what he wanted and not he didn't feel like exalting either the workers or the young people whom he cordially despises, as it seemed to him that concern for them was only a speculative pose of the left-wing parties.

At the end of the interview, the "bang" which consists in Professor Cassola's renunciation of teaching because now, given the one hundred thousand printed copies of Bube's Girl, of which seventy thousand have been sold, he can afford the luxury of writing only what is congenial to him , having found, or rather rediscovered, the right way and the right things to say.

*Now, if he advises everyone not to read anymore, why does he continue not just to write (that's his business) but to publish his books? It is true that*

*a book bought is not a book read, but his attitude, I mean Cassola's, gives rise to the assumption that he considers himself the only writer worth reading. If he is a socialist as he claims, why does he express ideas that are in stark contrast to the Marxist ideal?*

*And finally, isn't this humility of his, this sweetness and grumpiness of his a pose, the pose that he wants to avoid at all costs?*

*After all, wouldn't that famous advice not to read anymore cut off his livelihood too? Unless everything written in the article was just journalistic fabrication.*

*Renata Ordavo - Viareggio*

I have known Cassola for many years. I read it in '39 or '40, for the first time: I was a boy and he was on his first book. Since then I have always followed and read him, as one of the best Italian writers: I remember a short story by him, wonderful, called Le amiche. But also the famous ones, Taglio del Bosco and The House of Via Valadier, and the first part of Vecchi Companions, and the first three quarters of La Ragazza di Bube... Then I met him in Rome, in person: and there we immediately made friends. A little grumpy and shy, both of them, it's true. We always exchanged a few rare words: but we read each other's human and stylistic qualities within each other, I know, with glaring clarity. There was something integral and definitive about knowing each other: it was an ontological pleasure. I knew all of Cassola's foibles: his madness for Joyce's Dublin is old news to me. And also his provincial (and, ultimately, country) protest against "progress". It was a pleasant, nice "pose", which, I repeat, was a pleasure to know, and perhaps make fun of a little. There is nothing more beautiful than "explaining" things to yourself: seeing how well a psychological or cultural analysis adds up. And Cassola, for such analyses, was a laboratory object. After all, every writer has his quirks, his little atrocities, his dishonesties, his anger. Which are fine as long as they are the object of knowledge of a small circle like me, him, Bassani, Cancogni, Bertolucci, Gallo, Garboli... But as soon as this circle is overcome, and those foibles, those irritations, those moods become public, through the atrocious manipulation of the rotogravure or the publisher's press office, then the thing changes its appearance. Then honest and offended people like you, kind reader from Viareggio, intervene in the circle, which has monstrously expanded. Towards you, Cassola is wrong. And those left-wing kids who called him a fascist in the group, even if bitterly jokingly, were right. His provincialism,

his narrowness of minor Tuscan tradition, his anti-cultural distrust, can be witty: they can be a protest. But they are unreliable. And Cassola cannot play with those who don't want to play. Or, if he wants, he writes a work, a pamphlet, on these unreliable, and therefore entertaining, political-literary ideologies of his: only through style will he be able to make them digestible. Saying these things, crudely, explicitly, in magazines or on television, is a pure and simple reactionary act, which fascists are happy about; and Cassola should be ashamed of it.

n. 33, 16 August 1962

## FASCISTS: FATHERS AND SONS

*Mr Pasolini, why are so many young minds attracted by the danger of the fascist idea? Living in a society of young people, we ask ourselves this question and don't know the answer...*

*Michele Brucculeri, Daniele Squinzani - Turin*

I'll tell you a personal case, an example.

You may know or imagine how my life is marred by a series of useless duties. An empty answer to empty questions. That is, living partly in the world of pseudo-culture, or as my friend Elsa Morante says more explicitly, of unreality.

I owe this to the public part of my life: to that part of me that does not belong to me, and which has become like a New Theater of Art mask; a monster that has to be what the audience wants it to be. I try to fight, quixoticly, against this fatality that takes me away from myself, makes me a rotogravure automaton, and then ends up reflecting on myself, like an illness. But it seems there is nothing that can be done. Success is, for a moral and sentimental life, something horrendous, and that's it.

Many, too many journalists have ended up representing, little by little, this enemy world that wants its characters to be as it believes them to be. And, little by little, I ended up feeling a kind of rancor, dark resentment, pathological irritation towards them; just the sight of a newsstand, at certain times of the day, can make me feel sick.

Well, this is a preamble. I could have kept it for myself too, it's true. But you understand me.

Armed with this prevention, this dull and painful aversion, I would not have wanted to be interviewed, a few weeks ago, for a very popular

rotogravure. I resisted for a long time. Then I gave in, partly out of weakness (I am not capable of persisting in denying a favor), partly out of naivety (I always delude myself that things can go better than expected from experience). So I let myself be interviewed by a journalist: a lady who was still young, a little pale, but tough in features: a typical woman who comes from the province and lives alone, of her work.

I had a good impression of her: and I couldn't betray the respect I felt for her by giving her a mannered, calculated, cold interview. I chatted as if with a friend. It was also my first day of vacation, after the long work of dubbing Mamma Roma: I was in quite a good mood. I went to pick her up at her house, on a white and burning Tiber riverside, we ran joyfully along Via del Mare, towards Ostia, we took a bath, in that peace that is almost a din of the purest days of summer. And we chatted, a bit about everything, about literature, about cinema, about us. As much as my eternal shyness allowed me, I tried to be completely sincere with her: and I was effortlessly so, in reality. Perhaps because she knew her profession, like a good doctor, a good lawyer: who know how to listen and make you say, almost with silence, what you need to say. I realized it, and I respected it, that profession of hers: it was a title of merit, for her, in front of me.

After all, she too spoke to me about herself, her problems: the history of her marriage, the history of her work: and her son.

Here, her son, a teenager of fourteen or fifteen, born from a happy-unhappy marriage, and now alone with her: a fascist son.

Why was he a fascist? Perhaps in protest against her: the eternal controversy of children against parents, when parents, in some way, are the object of an elementary and unconscious moral condemnation. Or perhaps because he was abandoned to himself for many months, with an indifferent housekeeper, in a respectable neighborhood of the city, with rich and stupid school friends and, practically, all fascists. A series of coincidences. To create this absurd, painful event: to make your fists clench in anger, to give you a lump in your throat with exasperation.

She, the mother, was worried: as if about a small family and social drama. She told me that she was struggling with her son, trying not to abuse him, not to blackmail him in the name of his mother's authority or her experience. It was difficult, in short. She had taken him to see All'armi siam fascisti, and she, she hoped, not without some good results. The Duce, at least, had appeared to the boy as a somewhat crazy and ridiculous figure.

Then the conversation about the son stopped, according to the worldly souplesse of such conversations, and we moved on to something else.

So that girl with the naked and hard face disappeared, with the first day of summer vacation, from my complicated existence.

A few weeks later, "his piece" appeared in the rotogravure. It was the most offensive thing that could be written about me: offensive because it was written not by the usual imbecile who hates me in the name of his real or imaginary masters, but by a polite, civilized person of a good journalistic level. I was offended by the fact of seeing reiterated, by that person who had seemed respectable to me, all the clichés that people unworthy of any respect have heaped on me, to make that New Theater of Art mask that I was talking about: the "violent experiences" , the "mudite poetry", the business ability, the gratuitousness of the use of dialect and jargon. Provincial and ignorant judgments, which, almost out of inertia, my friend of a day repeated with the exhilaration that comes from winking through the cliché with sordid accomplices.

Here is a fascist operation: but fascist at heart, in the most secret closets of the soul. Italy is rotting in a well-being that is selfishness, stupidity, lack of culture, gossip, moralism, compulsion, conformism: to lend oneself in some way to contributing to this rot is, now, fascism. Being secular, liberal, means nothing when the moral strength that can overcome the temptation to participate in a world that apparently works, with its tempting and cruel laws, is lacking. You don't need to be strong to face fascism in its crazy and ridiculous forms: you need to be very strong to face fascism as normality, as a codification, I would say cheerful, worldly, socially chosen, of the brutally selfish basis of a society.

Ultimately, the son is less fascist than the mother: or, at least, there is something noble in his fascism, of which he himself certainly cannot be aware: a protest, an anger. In his adolescent honesty, he understands that the world he lives in is, ultimately, atrocious: and he lashes out against it, with the strength of the scandal that gives a boy his idea of fascism. The mother's fascism, on the other hand, is moral collapse, complicity with the artificial manipulation of ideas with which neocapitalism is forming its new power.

I confess that I felt a moment of almost poetic anger against that mother. And it occurred to me that she deserved that fascist son, it was right: it was an inevitability that had within it a perfect balance between giving and taking. And indeed, I also had the immediately repressed, because

ultimately bad, impulse to write an epigram; an epigram with which to wish my bourgeois enemies fascist children. May fascist children come to you - this is the new curse - fascist children, who will destroy you with the ideas born from your ideas, the hatred born from your hatred.

n. 36, 6 September 1962

## RESPONSE TO A «DISSATISFIED»

*Dear Pasolini, I follow with sufficient attention the answers that you give in «Vie Nuove» to the readers who write to you and I must say that I am not always satisfied with what you write. Sometimes her answers are full of big words that, to know their meaning, you have to go and leaf through a dictionary or an encyclopedia and good for me as I am a librarian at the cultural club (A. Gramsci) of Nonantola; but can you tell me how the others who don't have the chance to do like me do?*

Other times his answers are full of an arrogance that I thought impossible could exist in a man of his intelligence, of his intellectual stature; but I had to change my mind. I had to change my mind about another thing about him. When, last spring, Aristarchus came to Nonantola, right in our circle, and said that you are religious, I couldn't believe him. I had not found in Ragazzi di vita and A violent life the religious Pasolini that Aristarco spoke of; but I then found it in Accattone, in the poems The religion of my time and in Mamma Roma.

*But what surprised me most was the response you gave in issue 42 of «Vie Nuove» to Mano Liverani from Livorno, in which you declared that you do not consider yourself a modern writer.*

*But excuse me, have you reread your novels and your poems?*

*If what you wrote does not comply with the canons of modern literature, then it must be said that the modern writer is Balzac. You then go on to declare - I transcribe verbatim - «only the revolution can save tradition: only Marxists love the past». But what tradition are you talking about, excuse me? What love towards the past? It is sadly well known that traditions slow down the course of social renewals and if the socialist revolution happens, and I sincerely hope that it happens, because I don't believe what you say, it certainly cannot leave intact the medieval traditions that exist throughout Italy and not only in the South.*

*Then according to you the Marxist must love the past. It can't be true. In my opinion, we must remember and admire the past, and not love, what is*

*useful for the present and the future. It is not by loving things that one sees their defects but by remembering and admiring them.*

*In his conclusion, then, he used a very, very bad word: detest. I honestly don't hate anything. I admire Bach, Borodin, Tchaikovsky and I admire Parker, Monk and Jackson. I admire Mantegna, Paolo Uccello, Tiziano and I admire Sughi, Sironi and Guttuso; because, dear Pasolini, in my humble opinion, art is art in all times, even if made with twisted sheet metal and not only when it represents the past.*

*One last thing, a prayer: don't worry when they tell you that you have defects. Remember that you too are a "living being."*

*Sorry for the inconvenience and if you think these words of mine deserve it, thank you for your kind response. If you answer me, please use your informal address. I won't be offended because I think I'm still young enough. I am 22 years old.*

*Oreste Zoboli - Nonantola (Modena)*

Dear Oreste, thank you for your Emilian practicality, for your inability to mythologize and escape from the real and immediate data of the issues. I know well that my letters on «Vie Nuove» are full of defects: they are implacable «indicators» of states of mind that are often useless, fictitious, distorted by the immediacy of the circumstances which determine them to be defenseless, immature, excessive... Not we should never write, not even a single line, in moments when emotions are still in their making, still unrealized. It's the secret of style! Instead, the very place in which I write these answers is, by definition, contrary to detachment: to what the hermetic critics called the "decantation" of passions. So I offer myself in these lines completely uncovered, in the immediacy of occasions and moods. Having said this, as a general justification, and, I hope, quite understandable, with regards to the paragraphs of your nice indictment, I will tell you:

1) It's true, I often use "big words", that is, difficult technical words - out of inertia, out of habit. This is my usual language now: my technical, jargon, work language. But your request for simplification and linguistic reduction on my part seems a bit indifferent to me. I know well that things are clearer the more true they are. But truth is not always integral truth: it is often nascent truth, convoluted, contaminated with false truths or outdated truths.

Its linguistic equivalent, therefore, cannot always be clarity, complete clarity. And so in the search for truth, those who express themselves have

the right to go through the most passionate complications: and the interlocutor has the duty to adapt to them, to adapt their effort to that of those who express themselves. I cannot pretend, here, to be didactic or encyclopedic; to teach something to diligent listeners. I want to discuss: and this costs me effort, which then gives me the right to expect a little effort from my readers too. The knowledge of new words - and therefore of difficult concepts - the knowledge of new general phrases - and therefore of a specialized and different world - must not scare you: it must not make you appeal, demagogically, to a falsely healthy and direct simplicity.

2) As for arrogance... I don't know what to tell you: if you had this impression, so much the worse for me (perhaps an excess of pride, you meant, in the face of the continuous humiliations and degrading allegations to which I am subjected on a daily basis).

3) Religiosity. The word of Aristarchus will not be valid, I hope. I don't believe in God. If a Christian "inspiration" of love towards the things of the world and men survives in my works - I mean, an irrational, inspired love - I don't think I should be ashamed of it.

Isn't your Po Valley moralism - under which you wrote this letter - also a form of religiosity? Yet you won't be a practitioner either, I imagine. Indeed, as a good Emilian and Modenese, you will be anti-clerical! Yet if the Aristarchus were to take care of you, they would also find in you the - decisive - remnants of the old Christian man. And in whom would they not be found? I'm joking: but it is obvious that there is a "historically" Christian background within us: so much so that it is useless to discuss it. Useless and dry. It turns into a series of childish backlashes by the prosecution!

4) I insist on saying that I am not modern, in the sense that this word is commonly used in average literary discussions. I am - I hope - in the profound sense of the word. Abstract painting, for example, is modern in the current sense of the word: for me it is instead, in the profound sense, old, old: putet, quatriduana est! (It stinks, it's a four-day-old corpse.) A typical and glorious product of neo-capitalism, it represents it entirely: that is, it obeys its request for lack of intervention on the part of the artist: «Artist, take care of your internal things! May your art be the graph of your intimacy, perhaps the deepest and most unconscious one!": this requires capital from the artist. And the abstract painter, triumphantly, carries out the order: and, lost in the delightful-anguished meanders of his intimacy, he

even has the privilege of not feeling devoid of pride. Indeed, to believe that they are obeying the secret and less... bourgeois inspiration.

In my work, however - despite all the contaminations and colors due to my training, which has forever marked my irrationality, the docile matter of my unconscious - there is an absolute need to translate even the most subtle forms into rational terms. of inspiration. Hence my lack of modernity in the external sense of the word. My linguistic experiments - although complex, complicated and often too "exquisite" - have very little of what is called "experimentalism" (as in certain "modern" music, in "abstract" painting, or in the poetry of the avant-garde revival ).

5) Tradition and Marxism. Yes, I insist: only Marxism saves tradition. Oh, but understand me well! By tradition I mean the great tradition: the history of styles. To love this tradition you need a great love for life. The bourgeoisie does not love life: it owns it. And this implies cynicism, vulgarity, real lack of respect for a tradition understood as a tradition of privilege and as a coat of arms. Marxism, in the very fact of being critical and revolutionary, implies love for life, and, with this, the regenerating, energetic, loving revision of man's history, of his past.

The stupid history studied - by you and me - in state schools, finds all its truth, and therefore its strength and beauty, if studied through Marxist methodology, its still inexhaustible capacity for rediscovery. Sometimes, while wandering around Rome, I come across demolition work. I see old houses being torn down, old gardens leveled to build hideous neo-capitalist buildings. Well, the protagonists of Roman building speculation, the Torlonia, the Caetani, the Gerini, with the crowd of their servants, all say they are Christians and traditionalists: and, strengthened by this declaration which almost invests them with a heroic light, they attend without batting an eyelid. to the horrendous havoc that their excavators cause. I, who am subversive, according to them, a subverter of tradition, sometimes find myself, not in front of a large building, in a beautiful square, but even in front of an old wall that bears imprinted in its humble peperino, in the pores of its corroded ornaments, the signs of a style from the past - I find myself with tears in my eyes: tears of nostalgia and anger.

As you can see, I speak of the "past" as history in its unrepeatable and sublime products: even the most humble. If you remember and admire these products without loving them, you are at fault: towards the future. And don't confuse the silly, rhetorical, twentieth-century work of Sironi with that

of Guttuso, so lofty: well, do you see where the lack of real love towards things of art takes you? What illicit confusion? Here: I "detest" Sironi, for his rhetorical, archaeological love towards the styles of the past, while I love Guttuso, who truly loves tradition, with a clear, honest and courageous love: a love that never inhibits him - like every true love! — And which actually gives him strength and impetus, removing all modernism from his modernity, all vain avant-gardism from his experiments and his expressive violence.

not. 47, November 22, 1962

# 1964

## AFTER A YEAR

I resume this page of correspondence after more than a year, having finished the work that was too demanding to do anything else on the Gospel according to Matthew. Fortunately, a year never passes in vain, and therefore neither I nor my interlocutors are the same as we were a year ago. I couldn't possibly start with a heri dicebam. What has changed will gradually emerge from dialogue, confessions, conflicts, etc. For now, I can only make one observation, which can certainly serve as a preliminary discussion to the resumption of correspondence: it concerns the venue, the attitude, the tone with which I will exchange my opinions: and it is there that Perhaps something has changed. In fact: the risk that I don't even want to think about - such is the discomfort, almost the shame that comes over me to think about it - the risk of my speaking with unknown readers of «Vie Nuove», mostly simple men, who make culture - not their specialization, but their nourishment - was that of a certain "officiality". I blush to think of this, even if only as a possibility. I don't say "officiality" with all its trappings, not this ("due to the contradiction that doesn't allow it", and this "contradiction" was in my soul, in my way of being): but "officiality" as authority in recognized in some way. I don't want to have authority, know that. If I have it, I will have it from time to time, for the possible strength of my arguments at that given moment, of that given circumstance: and above all for sincerity. The monstrosity of the authoritative man is to take advantage of a sincerity, a commitment and a total risk of oneself through which he was able to achieve authority, and which, once achieved, were reproduced mechanically and a priori. I don't want to be part of your mythology, not even to the extent that that bit of success or defamatory or celebratory diffusion of my name might allow me to do so. I ask you for maximum democracy, not so much on your part, but in the demand for it on my part. It is difficult to maintain one's democracy without clumsily, when in some way one is in the chair: here I am, owner of a column, proposed, exposed, questioned on my opinions, etc. etc., I risk the professorship. In other moments I may perhaps have had the unconscious weakness of letting myself get carried away a little in the game (perhaps due to more important commitments that kept me psychologically and morally occupied, perhaps

due to immaturity, perhaps because it was inevitable that this should happen, it was a price that had to be paid pay) however now I would be wildly ashamed if I were to somehow take note of my state of influence, of my speaking with the protection of merits acquired in the field of my specialization.

## WHO CAN BE SCANDALIZED

It's true we need "myths", "authorities" and he who, through the cultural industry or the support of a current of opinion or the organization of a party or chance, becomes a "myth", " an authority", acquires new duties towards himself and towards others. Now his relationship with others is what it is, it is no longer that of an equal among equals. Guttuso talking about painting with the workers is a myth; Levi talking about moral issues with farmers is a myth. Maybe I do a little too by now: but leave me a few more years of work and study to learn to do it better, to better find the point of coincidence between authority and sincerity. It is not for nothing that I mentioned Guttuso and Levi: they were able to acknowledge their public role as artist-leaders with such seriousness and commitment and such incessant anxiety to understand and know. But woe betide if there was an artist-guide scheme! Everyone must be as he knows and as he can, as he really is. I, perhaps because deep down in my psychology I am mythological and a bit quixotic, have to particularly defend myself, in my unconscious, from such a position. This is perhaps the secret reason for my resistance, and for this type of preliminary discussion to the resumption of my correspondence in a large popular weekly.

Fortunately, things have happened this year that push me back with the force of objectivity from any possible position of certainty or officiality. For example, a film like The Gospel According to Matthew, or, even more, a book of verses like Poetry in the Form of a Rose (these are the things that happen to an author!): ultimately I am protected by my contradictions. It is from them that my democracy is ensured! And you will never be able to debate the issues that are important to us with me as with an authority, precisely because of the presence of my scandalous contradictions, and by which I am first and foremost embarrassed: because there is always a diachrony (complicated as long as you want) between the doing and thinking of an author. I live my contradictions and take note of them in two ideally different moments, even if often materially simultaneous. I would

like to say straight away, at the outset, that these contradictions are often more sensational than profound, more dramatic than substantial. That is, they can scandalize conformism more than reason. Of course, it may have embarrassed some communists that I made the Gospel like this: but this communist is then a conformist, anxious, etc. etc.

## THE PROBLEMS ON THE CARPET

Finally, in this year many new things have happened in the world, such as to force any professor to get down from his desk and review his positions, to rediscover the sincerity of his judgments. The increasingly sensational transition of capitalism from monopoly capitalism to technocratic capitalism (I don't know if I use an exact terminology...) with all that follows, which is unknown. The immediate and foreseeable effect (Lenin) of monopoly capitalism was imperialism (in whose dialectic we were involved until yesterday, until a moment ago): what will be the effect of technocratic capitalism? It would appear to be the greatest force of corruption on the working elites - or at least this is the most striking fact of the moment (the boom, the crisis of growth in the direction of industrialization and the centre-left - at least in Italy - all partly counterbalanced, at least in Italy, by the progressive and increasingly impressive increase in votes for the communists). Another visible and knowable point is the change in the relationship between the great capitalist nations and the underdeveloped world: (the transition from imperialist colonialism to neocolonialism). My pessimism pushes me to see a black future, intolerable to a humanistic gaze, dominated by a neo-imperialism with forms that are actually unpredictable. The second important thing this year is the Chinese question. This too forces us to review many positions: first of all the general simplism with which the historical phase of Stalinism was acknowledged and then settled. I have already repeated it a thousand times in the first year of this column of mine: we must better understand the phenomenon of Stalinism. Not by asking ourselves questions to which we already know or want to know the answers: but by asking ourselves real questions, and as such deeply risky ones. The third thing of great interest is the new course that is opening - first with Pope John (who was not just a good pope: because what he said and did was irreversible), and then, now, more laboriously, with Paul VI - in the world of Catholics. I believe, for

example, that in the very new generation of future Catholic leaders the anti-communist myth has largely been demystified. And this is of incalculable importance. On the other hand, a new course is also opening up in the communists' relationship with the Church - if I haven't misread an important passage in Togliatti's will... But we will have the opportunity to talk about all these topics for a long time, throughout the year of epistolary debates that we have before us. Courage!

n. 42, 15 October 1964

## THE «GOSPEL» AND THE COLLOQUIUM

Dear Pasolini, I have often read in the press that in the preparation of your film The Gospel according to St. Matthew you had contact with high Catholic hierarchies and in particular with the organization known as «Pro Civitate Christiana». Contrary to what you may think, I don't criticize you for this. Instead, I would like to know if this experience has led you to reflect on the possibility of a dialogue between Catholics and non-Catholics, on the great themes of the modern world: peace, social renewal, etc. Above all whether or not you believe that certain confluences that you may have found between your positions and those of certain Catholic groups can concretely become elements of a mass dialogue in our country at all possible levels.

*Giancarlo Bassetti - Ravenna*

Dear readers, this is the first letter to arrive following the resumption of the column. I wasn't happy to receive it. Not for itself, because in fact its questions are acute, "focused": but because it forces me to respond on a topic that I have talked about to the point of satiety in recent weeks, and furthermore it forces me to make my work and myself subject of discussion, which I would like to avoid as much as possible. But evidently now, for me, this, of discussing the Gospel, is a duty that is imposed on me by things, and requires that I overcome all uncertainty and all modesty: modesty, I say, of the inalienable intimacy that presides over poetic work, and modesty for that amount of sacrilegiousness that misrepresents this intimacy when it becomes public heritage, an object of interest on a non-specific level.

Dear Bassetti, why should I think that you criticize me for having had contact with «Pro Civitate Christiana»?

Priests are not the devil: otherwise we would have to adopt, reversed, the Manichean position of almost all Catholics towards us. You know that all discrimination is ahistorical and inhumane. There is nothing more insanely aberrant than racism. Now, on the part of the communists towards the priests, and on the part of the priests towards the communists, there is a kind of "racist" attitude: they, whether they want it or not, give in to a kind of discriminatory temptation, which devalues human wholeness and historical nature of the other, deprives him of reality, dissociates him. A priest in front of a communist, and a communist in front of a priest, almost always represents the appearance of the other: a "race" degraded by taboo, unreliable, humanly emaciated and repugnant. As a communist I too am not immune to this unconscious disease, and anticlericalism snakes like a worm inside me, sucking the blood of others, until it becomes a shadow, symbol, scheme of a set of things that seem unjust to me , of a world that I reject. And how much clericalism there still is in priests, how much ferocious, pathological a priori anti-communism, and therefore inhuman, and therefore anti-evangelical! Pope John was psychologically, I would say, incapable of discriminating, of seeing the other in man, the enemy by definition, by preconception, by taboo, by convenience: he only knew how to see the whole man in man. This was what his smile meant, so human, and above all, so humanistic. He combined culture with angelic nature. I learned in recent days that when he was in Istanbul, he attended Auerbach's philology and stylistic criticism lessons; and this explains many things to me, not only about his particular way of being "spiritual" (which is typical of a refinedly specialized person), but about the luminous "detachment" he had from the things of life, the global gaze he cast on world, beyond its crazy discriminations. Can you imagine Pope John scandalized or indignant against the eight million communist voters in Italy? I do not. And humanly and historically he was not. Of course, he could not approve of their "atheist philosophy": this certainly made him shake his head with good nature and sorrow, in that absolute certainty that those who believe have and therefore cannot hate.

Now, a question that is philosophical is presented by the clerical bourgeoisie as a practical question. For communists, it is a question of giving greater or lesser weight to their own philosophy of Enlightenment and positivist origin: or even of accepting it or not. Or at least to discuss and update it, given that science itself has overcome certain scientific

positions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However all this proceeds, two things remain certain: 1) An atheist philosophy does not preclude respect for religion; 2) An atheist philosophy is not the only possible philosophy of Marxism - so much so that the Marxist and working class base has always been a majority of believers, and even at a high level there have been many Catholic Marxists. And it is in any case a current and typical fact of contemporary Marxism that it contains many elements of bourgeois and irrationalist culture, elaborating them in a complex and original form.

n. 44, 29 October 1964

## THE WOMAN-LEAD

*Dear Pasolini, studying universal history, we note with horror that in the majority of cases "gorillas" come to power and not truly superior men. An Alexander rises to supreme command and not an Aristotle, an Alcibiades and not a Socrates, a Mussolini and not a Gramsci, an Adenauer and not a Schweitzer, a De Gaulle and not a Sartre etc. The only major exception (which confirms the rule) is Lenin. Why then are intellectuals satisfied with an ancillary function and a shady life? Perhaps because the spirit shuns action which is always decision, audacity, violence? Or does a sedentary lifestyle make intellectuals cowards? If they practiced in some fencing or boxing courses wouldn't they acquire the courage necessary to realize their ideas?*

*Antonio Altariva - Wolfen Kr. Bitterfeld Repubblica Democratica Tedesca*

Your letter is so demanding that I feel like answering you a little jokingly. Well, if it were up to me, I would put a woman in power - a well-chosen woman, naturally - cultured and wise: at any time and in any country. If I had to clinically outline what type of woman would be perfect for this purpose, I would say, in Freudian terms used with the utmost freedom and maximum ease, that she should be a woman aged twenty-five and over, with a fixation on the phallic period (4-5 years of age, the age at which women, in other words, feel a bit masculine) without further castration complex and on the other hand without residual exhibitionism (which in women are monstrous, always, while in men they are at least biologically justifiable). These latter women (phallic-exhibitionistic) usually have artistic successes (actresses or writers): and therefore, as you observe, they

are to be considered, like males, unsuitable for power. The ideal woman for power, therefore, presents herself as a formidable administrator, strictly functional, without vanity, without too distant prospects (which are male idealisms), but with sincere and practical prospects towards the near future: psychologically she would be unbeatable, and without to boast about this, which at a certain point makes even the most psychologically penetrating men short-sighted. In conclusion, you will tell me, my ideal, albeit joking, of the "leadership", of the "presidency", of the "seat of power" is indifferent. Yes, the woman I have thus outlined would be the maximum exaltation of the idea of power as a technical and administrative exercise. Very bad. I would therefore propose, around the Female exercising power, a Committee of male ideologists, who would limit themselves to providing the Female with needs: but the executive power should belong totally to her.

This could be the plot of a comedy. But aside from the joke, it seems to me that you contrast "thinkers" with "tyrants", not with democratic heads of government. It is clear then that there is a good reason if in place of the "tyrant" there is no "thinker": the good reason consists in the fact that a serious person neither wants nor can be a tyrant. Your contrast would then have reason to exist if you instituted a contrast between "thinkers" and "democratic heads of government": but in general the latter have always been cultured men, intellectuals, even if not specialized in philosophy or poetry, but simply, let's say, in economic sciences. Therefore: intellectuals are happy where they are: because 1) they would neither be able nor want to be absolute leaders, 2) because normal heads of government are much more suitable than them for that specialized job which is governing.

In short, it doesn't seem to me that a "republic governed by poets" would be ideal: poets in fact have many characteristics in common with tyrants (inferiority complex, tendency towards narcissism and exhibitionism, need for revenge, etc., etc.). This being the case, poets present themselves as magnificent tyrannicides. And then that "fencing or boxing course" that you speak of, would optimally be a kind of discipline for "tyrannicidal apprentices", anarchists and classical poets. (See De Gaulle? He knows Latin, he was a tyrannical murderer and now he is a tyrant.)

not. 46, November 12, 1964

## EXPRESSIVITY VERSUS INSTRUMENTALITY

*Dear Pasolini, I am 27 years old, I worked for nine years in a mechanical factory; now after immense efforts (I'm not exaggerating!, competitions gone down the drain, etc... I managed to find myself a job (as a driver-delivery boy at a large chemical products company). Not that I earn more with the new job, but at least there's no shortage of work. During the time I worked in the mechanical plant, strikes followed one another in a chain, now that I'm no longer there, it's the same tune. Now I'd like to say this: there are some people, with whom I had the opportunity to speak (in my new job), who ignore or even don't know what work is within a large industry. Even the worker's family members themselves are in the dark; why? The why is also given from the fact that during working hours no outsider (except in rare cases) can circulate inside the factory and therefore cannot be aware of what is happening inside. Let's also consider the case of people unrelated to work who have witnessed the processing and visited the factory, this has no value. Because you have to spend, at least, eight hours (a day) in contact with the worker, the machine, the processing times, the bosses, etc... Now I ask myself: «Is it possible, after so much struggle and so many strikes, not to have managed to obtain that indispensable minimum, which can give the worker a more peaceful standard of living?". Dearest P. P. P., I am addressing you because you are the only one I know well and for whom I have a strong sympathy and trust. It is known that people do not read much, especially what concerns the problems and historical events of the worker; but he very much likes to go to the cinema. So I ask myself: why don't you make a film about the Italian working class world? Is it perhaps so difficult and impossible to make those who are well aware of the pain and anxieties of those who continually struggle to live?*

*[unsigned]*

Chaplin's Modern Times is an absolute film, which said something about factory work that is unsurpassable, in the imagination. Have you ever had a dream, which you then continually recognize in reality, as a reality explained outside of itself, which repeats itself, mysteriously, imbuing objects and people with its meaning? Charlot's film is like a dream made about the reality of the factory, and every time a factory comes under the eyes (the eyes of a stranger like me), it is as if summarized and prefigured by that dream - it does not go outside the terms of that dream - has no important elements outside of that dream. The obsession with repeating gestures - the eye of the (technicalized) owner who observes - the idiotic

and sublime indifference of the machine - are all the real details that have reference to a mysterious prophetic dream already had. There is no director who has not dreamed of Modern Times, and this is perhaps why no director has enough autonomy to remake a film about the factory. The fact that Charlot's film is from a few decades ago is of no importance, because, not being a realistic film, it is not "dated": Charlot captured the obsession of the factory in its absolute moments, and its dreamlike criticism, rendered metaphysics with the very human force of comedy, is valid beyond any particular historical situation.

I believe this is a unique fact in the history of culture. No painting representing Christ has ever prevented another painter from making another painting representing Christ, and no novel of even a very particular bourgeois environment has prevented another novelist from taking up that environment etc. etc. Every fact, or person or circumstance of life presents itself as virtually inexhaustible and multivalent. You have practically no resistance to the idea of seeing the tale of Little Red Riding Hood or a story of adultery represented or told a hundred times or by a hundred different authors: while you stiffen at the idea of seeing the world represented a hundred times or by a hundred different authors of the factory.

It means that in the world of the factory there is a fundamental monovalence, an obsession that does not allow variations. It practically means that life has taken on different characters, which have no prefigurations at any time in the past. It's not for nothing that Charlot titled his film Modern Times: the characteristic of the factory is precisely this: that it is modern, but modern as nothing has ever been in history.

The impotence of the contemporary poet is precisely this: the impotence to represent in a thousand different and subjective ways, continually new, reinvented, etc. etc., that particular and exemplary moment of modern life which is the factory. Does he mean that there is something in modern life that can no longer be poeticized? Or that it can only be poeticized once and for all?

This is extremely important. Because today, with the technological and technocratic turning point, factory life comes to pose itself as a fundamental and I would say unique module of all life. This did not yet happen in Charlot's time, so much so that in the monstrous sphere of pure instrumentality or communication a man like Charlot who was instead entirely expressive could come to act as antithetical. This "expressive" man

who contrasts himself with the "communicative" or rather "functional" world of technology should ultimately be the poet. In short, we should think of worker-poets (I coin this definition on the now well-known one of worker-priests). Only by fully living the life of a worker in a factory is it possible to enter into it to the full, but not to live it passively or desperately (as happens to you), but to live it antithetically. That is, to oppose the freedom of man as "expressive" and not "instrumental".

It's not for nothing that I receive letters like yours so often: by now dozens and dozens of workers have turned to me (and probably also to other writers or directors) so that their world can be expressed. Instinctively you and your companions feel that the amount of poetry you have within you is not enough, as a right to freedom and expressiveness; that an act of conscious poetry is needed. The moment it is expressed, the factory is no longer the factory: but it re-enters existence, it rejoins the other great experiences of the past, it prevents the future.

## A PROBLEM FOR EVERYONE

As for me, I would certainly like to be a worker-poet. But infinite moralistic and aesthetic resistance prevents me from doing so, pretextually. I have the alibi that the world of my experiences is now another (what is called the "third world", and with which the industrialized world places itself in that new relationship, neocolonialism, which is so useful for understanding both the terms that compose it etc. etc.). Becoming a poet-worker would require such a vocation from me that it would throw my entire past and present life up in the air: a true act of asceticism. I don't exclude this possibility, because I don't want to exclude anything. What is certain is that coming to the factory as a visitor, as a sociologist, or as a director carrying out inspections and research, I don't feel like it. Not only is it immoral but it is aesthetically useless.

I would simply like to add that that fund of "historically new" which is in the absolute functionality of factory life, is now starting to characterize the whole of life in Italy too: and therefore the antinomy instrumentality-expressiveness is starting to become everyone's problem. That is, it is no longer just a factory problem. So that while until now an act of knowledge or an act of denunciation by a writer, which occurred outside the factory, only indirectly concerned the factory, now it begins to concern the factory

more directly; we are at the first moments of a new period of history which will perhaps be very long, and onto which Charlot's "dream" is projected like a nightmare. Never before has Marxism, as the worker's struggle against the monster-factory, and therefore, linguistically and aesthetically, as the struggle of expressiveness against instrumentality, placed itself as the foundation of human freedom as in this moment.

n. 50, 10 December 1964

## RETURN THEOLOGY

*Dear Pier Paolo, excuse the familiarity of the "you" which allows me to have a more spontaneous conversation, and allow me to refer back to the letter published in issue no. 48 of «Vie Nuove», to clarify some doubts already alive in me and which have become more acute with it, so much so as to push me to write to you quickly. These doubts concern the reconciliation between communism and faith, a topic that you have already discussed in these columns but which I would like to bring to your attention again. Can the communist believe? And because he believes, can he always be considered a communist? For me no! In fact, every political movement rests its structure on philosophical, internal foundations, perfectly suited to the external and contingent building. Therefore, a profound, intimate, substantial unity comes to life, whereby one of the two terms proves necessary and indispensable to the life of the other: and dualism exists only apparently, accidentally. You speak of non-Marxists who became Marxists, that is, in all probability, politically speaking, of fascists who became communists. Now we need to see to what extent the change in political direction coincided with the radical philosophical transformation, that is, to what extent fascism-communism was a consubstantial part of that belief-atheism. A communist can become a Christian Democrat or vice versa, due to an awareness, he can say, due to a moral fact parallel to a new social vision. But this is only an apparent, superficial morality; because there is another much deeper, ontological one: and it is the one that implies the total acceptance, body and soul, of a doctrine, the acceptance of every part of it. Given that on the social and political level Marx speaks of "communism", and on the metaphysical level he speaks of "materialism", the coupling communism-atheism becomes indispensable. The conclusion seems to me to be no different for someone who wants to be a man before being a politician, that is, to always and completely keep faith with moral*

*demands that change direction not due to a revolutionary or war reversal, but due to an increasingly passionate and total search for the truth.*

*Sauro Damiani, Marciana di Cascina (Pisa)*

Your objection, dear Damiani, is addressed to me from many quarters, especially naturally by members of the Psiup or the PCI. But he doesn't seem to have any reason to exist, because he answers a question that I have never asked myself, and which interests me only relatively, for the pure pleasure of the discussion, if ever. The question is, precisely, the one you ask at the head of your objection: "Can the communist believe?", and to which you answer, with great determination, in the negative. Well: admit that you have a communist "who believes" in front of you: there are many of them, at the most various levels, from the so-called "Catholic communists" to the workers and their wives, their daughters, many of their sons (those who scored in front of Togliatti's coffin). Do you refuse them? Do you scold them? Do you try to convert them to atheism? Very good at doing it. However, what I would like to point out to you is that: you posit one of your deductions as normative and moralistic, that is, you tend to impose the form of the "perfect Marxist". It may be that, evidence in hand, you are right. But then reality proves you wrong, or at least contradicts you. It then means that something is wrong with your reasoning. What's wrong with your reasoning is precisely an authoritarian, moralistic, normative tendency, ordering from above, etc. etc. that you borrow directly from a certain spirit - indeed! - Catholic, counter-reformist Catholicism, which is the basis of every Italian education. The need to coerce the disorder of reality towards a preconstituted order, written and consecrated in the texts.

Stalinism is over, and therefore it is also over in the depths of our consciences. In the act in which you outline the form of the "perfect Marxist" as essential, you tend to perpetuate a revolutionary spirit of a sectarian and conformist type.

I repeat: it does not matter, in my opinion, whether a Marxist can or cannot believe: this is a pseudo-doctrinary problem, an academic question. If you want to be rigorous, first of all accept reality, in its disorder: and analytically observe the its contradictions. It is there, in concrete terms, that you will be able to look for and give explanations. Why are there communist Catholics? Why does the worker Giovanni, or Mario, or Pietro, cross himself in front of his dead leader? Why are "religious" elements of a populist, humanitarian or anarchist color at the basis of the Marxist choice

of many bourgeois? Why? Why does the young Sauro Damiani from Marciana di Cascina, Pisa, bring into his reasoning theological canons which he has destroyed as such and which return to him in his mental habits as forms?

This is not a moment in which a communist should feel constrained by an immediate and urgent need for armed or ideological struggle - no war is being fought - no revolution or resistance is taking place: there is enough time to think. The horizon of a communist is wide and deep: and his precise duty, in order to completely escape from the years of the cult of personality which still distress the USSR, is to broaden and deepen the field of his conscience.

I believe that the new Marxism of these years must not know any rigidity, but on the contrary must be the historical science that it is, and which therefore has as its main characteristic the continuous formulation of hypotheses, the continuous search for explanations on facts that the necessity revolutionary left unresolved.

In your case, I would suggest you look better at what the word atheism means, if linked to Marxist materialism: what it is within the strict scope of Marx's thought, and what it has become outside of Marx, after Marx, despite Marx. Marx was a man, he was not a superman nor a god. He nor he was required to quibble, as we can do now, and as we ourselves have not been able to do so far. "A specter is haunting Europe...": I don't know how much theism can be implied in Marx's atheism, how much powerful, grandiose metaphysics can be implied in his perspective.

But at this point I will refrain, I would not like to go beyond the limits of my competence: it is just a suggestion that I would like to give you, an incitement to courage - to true, real courage, to the courage of those who fear no risk: to temerity. I tell you this because you are a communist who thinks: and therefore you must think truly, that is, without prudence. The risk of a disordered and excessively critical thought is preferable to the risk of a thought attracted by the reassuring nullification of any ipse dixit.

n. 52, 24 December 1964

# 1965

## I DEFEND «RED DESERT»

Dear Pasolini, I saw the Red Desert. Why and on what basis was the Golden Lion awarded to Red Desert and not to the Gospel according to Matthew? When I ask intellectuals this, they look at me and answer as if I were an idiot. And I know I'm not a moron and for me Red Desert (or rather grey) is just the painful story of a poor creature who hit her head in a car accident and left the clinic too soon. Your work is light in the darkness. Whether you "believe" or not, the important thing is that Jesus of Nazareth, known as the Christ, has returned to us, on earth, through this work of yours. The future will be like this for the brothers. Console yourself, God always chooses the least suitable to reveal himself to creatures. You have eyes and a heart to understand.

*Maria Bicci (Christian communist) - Grassina (Florence)*

Thank you for "holding" for me against Antonioni. But here, not out of loyalty (loyalty is a feudal and dangerously rhetorical concept: how many young people, out of loyalty, have become republicans?), but out of a duty to clarity and critical freedom, I have to argue with you, in favor of Antonioni.

Here: I was very, as they say, prejudiced, against the Red Desert. From inside and outside. Interior: I had liked La notte very little, and I found L'Eclisse detestable. In my opinion, in these works there were two contents: a formalistic one (i.e. the same form as content) and a pretextual one (the problems of modern society at an advanced level), unrelated to each other. So the first was reduced by the second to a stylistic exercise devoid of culture, aestheticizing as it could be in a documentary filmmaker of the 1930s: and the second was reduced by the first to a generic and unreliable problematic. Thus the formalistic content seemed to me to be a provincial by-product of French culture; and the social content is essentially amateurish.

My opinion on these films had not changed before seeing Desert. And it was confirmed by the judgments of others, both favorable and unfavorable. In short, I believed that the dualism I mentioned had worsened in the new film, if only due to the consumption of inspiration: that is, I thought that

formalism, with colour, had become even more formalistic, applying itself like a foreign crust over the exhausted sociological pretext of alienation.

I was wrong. I finally saw Red Desert, and it seemed like a beautiful film. There must have been a favorable subjective disposition in me too. For example, I entered the Parisian room (another favorable element) already knowing that I wouldn't like the dialogue (that bit of clumsy, embarrassing and a little ridiculous, which is only reflected in certain hendecasyllables of Quasimodo...): and therefore I was willing to silence it, not accept it, etc. etc.

However, I believe that no passionate elements of any kind play a role in my general opinion. So much so that I wouldn't want to dwell on the "poetic" points of the film, and there are many, and convincing ones. For example, those two or three violet flowers out of focus in the foreground, in the shot in which the two protagonists enter the house of the neurotic worker; and those same two or three violet flowers, which reappear in the background - no longer out of focus, but, absurdly, clear - in the exit shot. Or the dream sequence; suddenly - after so much exquisite color - conceived almost in technicolor just as a child who has seen similar things in comic films about Haiti and Hawaii can conceive of a fabulous beach (but there is a shot, taken I think with a 300, a documentary and therefore realistic - of the vessel on the choppy sea - which contradicts the sequence at its heart: it gives it a disturbing throb of truth, which cracks its exquisitely cartoonish surface). Or the sequence of preparation for the trip to Patagonia: the workers listening, etc. etc.: that stupendous close-up of a poignantly "real" worker, followed by an absurd panning along a blue stripe on the white lime wall of the warehouse. There is a profound, mysterious, at times very high intensity, in the formalism that ignites Antonioni's imagination. And that the basis of the film is totally this formalism, finally rigorous and brought to the point of poetry, is demonstrated by a look at the editing: in which two stylistic operations predominate which reveal the absolute pre-eminence of the world as an aesthetic spectacle over the story and the characters. These two operations are: I) The successive juxtaposition of two points of view of insignificant diversity on the same image: that is, the succession of two shots that represent the same situation, first close up, then a little further away, or first frontally and then a little more obliquely; or even on the same axis but with two different objectives. The result is the insistence that becomes obsession, as a myth of the

substantial and anguished autonomous beauty of things. II) The technique of having characters enter and exit the frame, whereby, in a sometimes even obsessive way, the editing consists of a series of "frameworks" that I would call informal, where the characters enter, say or do something, and then they exit, leaving the picture again to its pure, absolute informality; which is followed by another similar painting, where the characters enter etc. etc. So the world presents itself as a mythical pictorial beauty, which the characters invade, it is true, but by adapting themselves to that beauty, rather than desecrating it with their historical presence.

The editing therefore in itself clearly demonstrates the prevalence in this film of an obsessive formalist myth, finally liberated, and therefore poetic.

But how was this "liberation" possible for Antonioni? It was possible by creating the "stylistic condition" of what in novels is called "free indirect discourse", and which in films could by analogy be called "free indirect vision". That is, the author sees the world through the eyes of his character. In cinema, the so-called "subjective" corresponds to direct speech: that is, the camera "materially" replaces the eyes of the character.

In The Red Desert Antonioni no longer attaches, as he had done in previous films, his vision of the world to a vaguely sociological content (the neurosis of alienation): but he looks at the world through the eyes of a patient (I believe the car accident is not was random: but it was probably a suicide attempt by the woman). Through this stylistic mechanism, Antonioni freed himself: he was finally able to see the world through his eyes, because he identified his delusional vision of aestheticism with the vision of a neurotic. This identification is partly arbitrary, it is true, but arbitrariness in this case is part of poetic freedom: once the liberating mechanism has been found, the poet can become intoxicated with freedom. It does not matter if it is illicit to match the "pictures" with which the world presents itself to a real neurotic, with the "pictures" with which the world presents itself to a neurotic poet; whatever is illicit in this operation becomes the non-poetic and non-cultural basis of the film; what is legitimate is his "poetic intoxication". The important thing is that there is a substantial possibility of analogy between the neurotic vision of a poet and that of his neurotic character. There is no doubt that this possibility of analogy exists. And its contradictory nature is then a cultural fact, which instead of being objectified in the character, is subjectivised in the author. So precisely due to the extraordinary formalistic success this time, the

approach to the sociological theme of alienation is not even illicit and unreliable.

n. 1, 7 January 1965

## RENEWING YOURSELF FROM THE «GHOSTS»

Dear Pasolini, reading your dialogues makes me think that you are like the Christ of your Gospel: always a little angry with your neighbor, always completely misunderstood and therefore always a little resentful. When I saw your beautiful Gospel, the disciples of Christ made me feel a little sorry: it never happened that they said something that the Master accepted or accepted completely. In dialogues, the disciples are your interlocutors. You love them without a doubt, but you always feel a little misunderstood and therefore resent them. I am wrong? It would be interesting if you could illustrate this aspect of your character to us.

*Mario Vinciguerra - Milan*

Yes you are right. I am often impatient with my correspondents. However, never against them (as you observe): but rather against certain ghosts, which still haunt Marxism - and of which they, naively, and without personal fault, are enslaved. I return from a trip, albeit a short one, from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and France. In those nations the PCI is at the center of attention: in a positive sense in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in a polemical sense in France (where it is instead the "model" of a movement of young people, called, rather than "Italianizing", even " Italians": whose magazine is "Clarté" - and who are undoubtedly an extraordinary phenomenon).

The PCI has earned a prestigious position, with the utmost merit. However, I who live in Italy, every day, every hour, cannot help but still feel the presence of those "ghosts" (conformism, Stalinism, party patriotism, the lack of criticism or a purely nominal self-criticism... .): indeed, feeling this, and not omitting any possible criticism of mine on this, is my precise function, and my duty as a writer. Even more so today: in which the fundamental theme of Marxism, throughout the world, is its sincere and profound "renewal", the absolute necessity of which has different reasons in the various countries of the world, but which nevertheless coincides chronologically and cannot be postponed. The "base" to which the majority of my correspondents of "Vie Nuove" belong must be aware of this absolute

need for renewal: and it is therefore human if I feel a certain movement of exasperation and impatience when I hear from some of my correspondents rehashing old motifs, old lessons, old affirmations, to which he is blindly attached, on which his very existence depends: precisely at the moment in which a profound and total critical examination should bring everything into play, without fear and without regrets .

In recent years we have entered a period of history that is now beginning to extend beyond the possible predictions of Marx and Lenin: at least in three directions: I) Atomic science and the conquest of space; II) The presence of the Third World and the end of the old colonialism; III) The evolution of capitalism towards new forms of technocracy.

Faced with such an impressive change in the shape of the world, I get exasperated to hear old clichés repeated, and to hear Marx cited, not as a truly great innovator of human thought, but as one of the many Aristotles: and naturally, my impatience also involves a certain criticism of the relationship between the leaders of the PCI - so advanced along the line of "renewal" - and the base which seems to me to be a little left in the dark, perhaps for fear that the critical exercise will present itself as corrosive rather than as a renewer.

In very simple words, the renewal of Marxism is necessary for these reasons:

I) In socialist countries, because Marxism came to power, and, by coming to power, its vision or interpretation of the world became "authoritarian", and remains so. That is, it does not evolve along the paths indicated by Marx and Lenin. The revolution does not continue. Therefore the new generations are blocked. And the contrast between Marxism in movement and Marxism fixed in authority (let's say the contrast between culture and power) is reduced to a dry and anguished debate. Everything would be resolved if the revolution could resume its natural march towards the total decentralization of power. But this is not possible yet. Hence a profound crisis, for which pretextual solutions are sought (for example in the field of literature, which is what I know best, the "return" to pre-revolutionary literary situations, and the acceptance of absurd avant-garde calls of an irrational type , typical of certain capitalist situations).

II) In France, because Marxist culture today pays for the lack of experience of a total revolution in political, moral and literary values. In France there has not been a revision, so to speak, anti-liberal, which

involved everything that has been produced by the great French culture from the end of the nineteenth century to today. No Marxist Frenchman has ever courageously carried out this revision that overturned everything: every Frenchman therefore finds himself immersed in a morally indistinct cultural sphere, in which everything has citizenship. Every Frenchman, even a Marxist, is like a Pharaoh inside his pyramid. The PCF has picked up this social legacy of his nation, tending towards crystallizations, towards pyramids. It finds itself suffering, absurdly, from the same crisis as all of French civilization: the crisis of the liberal world. (This is why one of the young "Italians" said, always repeating it like an obsessive refrain, the phrase "We must overcome liberalism".)

III) In Italy, because the advent of neo-capitalism has taken on almost revolutionary forms for our society, which, lacking the complexity, maturity, tradition and greatness of the French, English or American bourgeoisies, is sensationally marked by it. Indeed, the birth of a potentially hegemonic bourgeoisie (as had already happened in the nineteenth century in the large European states) and its neo-capitalist aspect coincide. This means that at the center of Italian political life there is a struggle between "conservative" forces (the Northern industrialists) and "Labour" forces (the centre-left): Marxism must keep that center occupied. And this implies a bold, sincere, integral operation of renewal. Every reference to old and comfortable positions of struggle therefore strikes me as absurd and guilty.

n. 4, 28 January 1965

# THE TECHNOLOGICAL LANGUAGE

*Dear Pasolini, on February 3rd I listened to you in the debate on «language and literature», at the Casa della Cultura in Rome. I would like to know: doesn't it seem to you that in all these years the PCI, the trade unions, the left-wing political organizations have contributed to a considerable extent to the creation of a certain language through rallies, meetings, debates? Doesn't it seem to you that, given the vastness of the influence of these organizations, and also given the penetrating power of the arguments, this language - which was jargon - has also become the heritage of the national language, in its dialectical process?*

*It seems to me to be a case in which an oppressed class (through its organizations) has imposed a certain modification of language.*

*Tonino Desiderio - Rome*

Two words to explain to other readers what it is about. In a conference, later published in «Rinascita», I argued that «Italian was born as a national language». Italian has always been - I explained - a literary language (Dante is not the "father of Italian", but the "father of literary Italian"). With national unity this literary language (also used previously but in irrelevant and sporadic cases, outside Tuscany, as a language of use or instrumental) became the language of national relations, it became the average language of the nation. But it has never been a truly national language (like French or English: that is, a language known, accepted and developed by all social classes): it has simply been the language of the bourgeoisie. That is, the language of a class that used it for its own economic-political interests and for its own cultural pretexts - and finally for its own literature - imposing it from above on the other social classes, like a foreign language. The great unifying principle from above, authoritarian or paternalistic, of this medium language was the bureaucracy, the state apparatus. And the means of diffusion, in addition to the humanistic and petty-bourgeois schools, were the basic infrastructures, the army, the railway, newspapers, etc. Latin had always been the great model of the language: now, this model was "bourgeoisized" through the "bureaucratic-state spirit".

Italian as a national language begins to exist (still rather as a principle, as a possibility, than as a reality) in these years. What happened? That the dominant bourgeoisie, through the complete industrialization of the North,

through a new type of (neocolonialist) relationship with the South, through an enlargement of the means of production and diffusion of the "culture of power" (television, above all), through that new type of urbanism which is internal emigration (whereby Milan and Turin replace America), the dominant bourgeoisie, I repeat, tends to become hegemonic. And since this "qualitative leap" coincides - on a global level - with the neo-capitalist evolution towards technocracy - and, linguistically, towards the technological language - there is a real social revolution in Italy. The new technocratic bourgeoisie (potentially) holds economic power, culture and language together: and since it necessarily identifies itself with the entire nation, for the first time it can be said that Italian, at least potentially, is starting to be a national language. Its unifying principle is no longer the bureaucratic spirit, but that new spirit - without precedent or equivalent in the past - which is the technological spirit, that is, the "culture of applied science". The geographical centers of Italianization are Turin and Milan, ideal locations for companies (instead of courts, convents or universities). All the various types of Italian languages are modified and standardized. For example, the language of official politicians has lost the prevalent reference to Latin and emphatic classicism, and replaces it with a reference to the communicative efficiency of the language of technology.

It's clear that I don't want all this: I simply note it. And since my observation does not occur outside Marxism, but from within Marxism, this observation is objective only as a diagnosis. I am not at all impartial in the face of these phenomena: I want to know exactly what they are and why they exist, so that my Marxist criticism does not grope against phantoms, but modifies itself by adapting to the changes that capitalism imposes on the world with brutal pragmatism and to Italy.

This is why interventions like this one by Tonino Desiderio - and others that I listened to in the debate to which Desiderio refers, at the Casa della Cultura in Rome - seem to me to be suggested by something authentic but old. I am not interested in celebrating the glories and keeping in mind the merits of the PCI and Marxism: what has happened has happened. Among other things, I myself participated in what happened. All my "commitment" as a writer - even from a linguistic point of view - coincided with the workers' and popular struggle of the 1940s and 1950s. But I don't want to linger with the good memories, and the heroic memories. Moving forward

means undermining what is behind, always. Now, Marxism must be put in crisis, to really act in the present, in the ultimate form of reality.

## LINGUISTIC DISPUTE

As for the intervention of Desire, well, I could make this observation. Not even a revolution that brings Marxism to power has immediate linguistic effects: it is limited, initially, to contesting and putting out of play some linguistic elements typical of the previous ruling class. The language of the Italian political struggle undoubtedly had a great weight in the evolution of the Italian language: but future historians will deal with this. We cannot be satisfied nor should we think that it is enough to continue along the path we have followed so far. Just as the Giolittian, bureaucratic-state Italy had contested and put out of play "agrarian classicism" (academic aulity, up to D'Annunzio) replacing it, through a push from below that was not popular, but of the middle classes with a "petit-bourgeois classicism" (i.e. fascist rhetoric), from the Resistance onwards it happened that a popular push from below, led by the PCI, in turn contested and put fascist classicism out of play, setting out on a path - which it had seemed to all of us the good one - of renewal of Italian from below, of Italianisation of Italy through the revolutionary presence of the people, and through a Gramscian national-popular idea of literature. It was essentially the Italian path of commitment (neorealism and discovery of popular and dialectal Italy). But now this path has suddenly been blocked by a new phenomenon, which has diverted the historical process of linguistic Italianization. The phenomenon is what I described above: the brutal presentation of the Italian bourgeoisie as a hegemonic class, which comes to interrupt the great communist hegemonic dream.

Therefore, for a Marxist, judging and linguistically contesting the "possible national-technological Italian" means judging and politically contesting the new historical phase of our bourgeoisie. That is, identifying the new position and the real consistency of the enemy, to face it on the new terrain and with the new means that Marxism's criticism of itself can offer.

n. 7, 18 February 1965

## «ORAL» ITALIAN AND THE ACTORS

*Dear Pasolini, the controversy over the "non-existence" of Italian as a national language continues, and I tend to agree with your conclusions. However, it happens that in a recent discussion I found myself in difficulty, with respect to my opponents, on the following problem: if Italian does not exist "in nature", what language do the actors speak on our prose stage? It is still a "spoken" and not a "written" language capable of being understood and appreciated; to entertain or move in every corner of the Peninsula? I therefore turn the question to you, asking you to give an explanation on «Vie Nuove». It would be better if you could broaden the discussion to include the relationships between the language of poetry and that of theatre.*

*Maria Micheli - Rome*

The language of poetry is a language apart. Its internal and permanent characteristic is diachronicity. Therefore a poet is always late or ahead of the historical circumstance and in general his time. But if diachronicity characterizes the entire language of poetry, constituting a particular history of the language of poetry, in every literature - this diachronicity is also typical of every single poem. The time of poetry is the remote, the imperfect or the future: the epic action, the evoked action or the predicted action. The present perfect is impossible (as is typical in today's use of Italian): the present is possible as a dramatization of the past, that is, as a historical present. Even the present of the diary is nothing but a fiction: in reality the poet's soul is already reminiscent. In short, one would say that poetry must be supported by the myth of time: to spread a veil of time over the things said, either the past or the future. In this diachronicity one can conceive its tendential meta-historicity, otherwise of an ambiguously spiritualistic type. We understand that its irrationality (which takes shape in the myth of time) is only apparently such: it is nothing more than a re-enactment or an elliptical logical prediction. Intuition is nothing but some leap of logical thought. This is why every poetic or generically intuitive act can always be traced back to a rational ideology.

The language of theater, however, is by definition a synchronic language: evocations and predictions are possible but must be done on purpose. You can have a theater (in verse) entirely written in the language of poetry: but the starting point, explicit or implicit, represented or alluded to, is always substantially synchronic with the other languages of a given historical moment. However, there are cases in which not only the language of poetry,

but the entire system of sublanguages, is not synchronic in a historical language. For example, in modern Italian there is a substantial diachronic leap: that between "graphic signs" and "oral signs". The same word is no longer the same if used as a graphic sign or as an oral sign. If one can doubt the existence of Italian, it is not possible to doubt the existence of an Italian pronunciation. Now, given that the time of the theater - at least the essential time, the one from which a fortiori one starts by acting on the stage in front of an audience - is the present, and not the historical present, but a real present, the lack of a media tradition oral, that is, in this case, of a "pronunciation" universally used and accepted, is decisive for the fortune of a national theatre. Now in Italy, lacking this national "pronunciation", uselessly replaced in the theater by a convention modeled on the French or English one, and codified, for speech, by horrendous fascist nationalizations, the "present" of theatrical language is missing. This is a problem that actors and theater directors do not feel: and then they resent the unpopularity of the theater and the impossibility of an Italian theatre. They believe that it is enough to pronounce short or long o's and e's at the right time, make doubles heard, sound s's equally, etc. etc.: in short, take care of absolute purity with respect to every possible dialectal pronunciation (following, but perhaps they don't know it, the prescriptions of the fascist linguists of the Eiar), to be in order: while, by carrying out all this to perfection, they perform a monstrous operation, and they create a language that no one in the audience speaks. They thus obtain a fictitious synchrony with the spectator's language. Only in recent years, with the advent of television, has this fictitious synchrony become a little more accepted: and viewers are starting to believe they speak like Enzo Tortora. This is how a conventional spoken middle language begins to form. But the real actor (like the real writer for the analogous medium written language) feels that it is an uncommon language. He therefore, in the rare cases in which this happens, polemically places himself in front of this "monstrous spoken middle language": and acts either above or below it: above, through a conscious poeticization and an abstract sublimation (but this is a case hypothetical: I have never heard it with my own ears. But let's suppose that a similar operation was that of Duse). Below: adopting dialects, sublinguistic desecrations, or caricaturizing the medium language itself. Acting in Italy can therefore only be expressionistic: and replace the "present" of the impossible linguistic synchrony with the spectator, with a

sort of mimetic synchrony, that is, with the pure and simple mimic presence of his body: from this starting point given per absurdum or, if we want, with a formula substituting the impossible word, we can start with expressionistic or caricatural re-enactments: never, however, naturalistic or "done seriously". The names of the Italian theatre, apart from the great Eduardo, and in general of the classical dialects, are names of expressionists of this kind, that is, the names of the cabaret theater Stoppa himself (despite his artistic union with Morelli) is an actor with the "grimace" of cabaret. The last interesting case is that of Betti: among these actors, she is probably the most aware and compromised. It is clear that the lyrics for her, whether good or bad, were composed on these premises.

n. 11, 18 March 1965

## TRIP TO MOROCCO

Naturally, when you go to visit a new country, you already have interpretation plans. And every discovery is a fight against these projects, which slowly fall away and are replaced by others, real ones. Therefore, discovering is always very tiring, somehow disgusting. As far as Morocco is concerned, I slowly had to give up a whole series of ideas I had had about its presence in the "Third World". I knew, of course, that Morocco was not the typical country of the «scandalous dialectical relationship that the Third World establishes with the industrialized, neo-capitalist or Marxist world»: however, I was convinced to find and verify some of the data that I believed to be constant in this relationship Moroccan trip. I was not disappointed, no, but confused. None of that data is in the consciousness of Moroccans. They are certainly there, but they are sunk in brute reality: pragmatic, unaware. Naturally I am talking about what appears to the eye of a visitor who is on a pleasure and holiday trip. I didn't carry out any surveys, I didn't carry out any investigations, I didn't set up any research, I didn't attempt any interrogations. I let myself be carried away by facts and things: especially those that fell before my eyes. Well, in this complex (and beautiful) picture of visual reality, I did not recognise, I repeat, anything of what I had gone to recognise. Morocco is a large expanse of Mediterranean-African landscapes, inhabited, along a habitable strip, by twelve million people, of which a part (the great majority) is made up of farmers: who work their countryside wonderfully (especially in the region of Fez, the fields are cultivated with the grace and patience of goldsmiths; on another register,

but practically in a very similar way to that of certain peasant civilizations that are familiar to us, the Tuscan one, the Venetian one); such is the perfection of peasant work that one has the impression of a concluded world that needs neither to go forward nor to go back: but to remain still as it is. Indeed, one almost desires it, such is its visual beauty. Naturally there was an attempt to industrialize the work of the countryside: but the agricultural vehicles (tractors etc.) were charged to the farmers. The year of the attempt, the harvest was terrible: and the farmers were left only with debts. This put them in a bad mood against the King (the initiatives all have his mark) but above all it made them regress to their old ways. On the other hand, the possibility of cooperatives is easy, because there have always been peasant alliances in Morocco, which are a kind of archaic embryo of cooperatives. There is, in the countryside, the percentage of illiteracy that we recorded in Italy half a century ago. But the school problem is deeply felt; now there is no child who does not go to school, and illiteracy is destined to disappear very quickly even from the countryside. And this will probably mark the real date of the beginning of a real industrialization of peasant work. On this road, therefore, everything is normal and without surprises. It is a problem that concerns the problem of the countryside all over the world rather than concerning the Third World: and Morocco aligns itself almost pragmatically, almost automatically, on the path of all the other countries.

I don't have a clear understanding (before my eyes) of the situation of those who are outside the archaic Arab peasant world: I have, before my eyes, a great swarm, which I won't stop to describe so as not to cause colour. The bureaucracy, of course: especially in beautiful Rabat, residence of the Government and the King. The army and the police. And the great Mediterranean-barbarian craving for small business.

Then there is a minority of rich people, old (agrarian) and new (I suppose), who definitely put Morocco on the path of neo-capitalism, also following its external forms. Casablanca is a neo-capitalist bedlam based on the old French colonialist style (respectable, and always in good taste, sometimes a little ironic, throughout the rest of the country) and on the old Arab casbah, decayed and crumbled: a western neo-capitalism, probably in hand to marauders (the orgy is that of phosphates) allied to foreign financiers, especially Americans I believe: which gives the Moroccan cities, on that barbaric peasant background of the hinterland, a decidedly

international and violently modern air (much more than any city Italian). So that two very different ways of life are contaminated among the Moroccan bourgeoisie (at least to my purely visual examination): a provincial-traditionalistic one, with the Koran at its centre, and an international-modernistic one, with phosphates and similar at its centre. It is an internal dialectic, which concerns Morocco, and can only marginally interest a foreigner; it is a particularistic problem of development.

What is decidedly archaic is a sense of social and civic insecurity that is felt throughout the country, and which Morocco has in common - I must say - with the vast majority of Afro-Asian countries, underdeveloped or developing. Moravia and I will always remember a suitcase theft in Ghana (which is perhaps the most advanced of these countries) which ended, upon recovery of the stolen goods (in the best hotel in Akkra), with the violently, stubbornly and childishly outstretched hands of the policemen. to get a tip. During my trip to Morocco those very serious bloody events occurred which I imagine the newspapers also reported in Italy. Those days I was in the city of Mogador, quiet on the ocean: I didn't notice anything. In Casablanca, home to the most inconceivable police atrocities of those days, I arrived when things were over, but still with a curfew. I went around even during curfew hours, to see. And there I had the feeling that nothing guarantees the safety and the most basic security of the citizen (however I must add that there is no need for this guarantee, because, like all archaic peoples, the Moroccan people, except for the criminal areas, are very mild: and the sudden explosions of ferocity and violence are facts that go beyond a guarantee of civic tranquility). The plague of Morocco seems to me, in this sense, to be due to the presence of two armed forces, perhaps rivals of each other: the (voluntary) army and the police. It is precisely on weapons that soldiers base their often bold confidence towards the police. During the curfew they could go around drunk, and, when they encountered the police, a kind of fair play was born, based on slaps on the back and bright childish smiles: which confirmed the substantial anarchy in those forces that should guarantee public order .

The average intelligence among Moroccans is low, I must say: and this too is what they have in common with many other developing peoples. Certainly not for ineluctable racial reasons: but for a centuries-old lack of exercise of any critical function. There is a profound simplicity (which is only darkened in the well-defined areas of the underworld) that makes

Moroccans delightful but a little uninteresting. It is in this lack of intelligence or rationality that the lack of any stable revolutionary charge must be sought on the one hand, and the sudden, pathetic and atrocious violence in the streets on the other. The question that haunts even a disinterested visitor to Morocco is the following: "What is the hope of Moroccans?". It would seem that there is no other immediate hope in those simple hearts than a petty-bourgeois ideal possibly united with the old loyalty to the Koran. Compared to France or Europe in general, they are a bit like a Lucanian compared to Milan: they don't criticize, they don't judge: they would simply like to move there, as in places that a priori guarantee a superior bourgeois type of life, praised in the context of a kind of plebeian snobbery.

To this meekness, to this reasonableness and common sense (peasants), to this petty-bourgeois idealism, very naive, and without yet the hateful sense of "personal dignity" that petty-bourgeois idealism gives to its users, to this surviving archaic and medieval loyalty towards the institutions, the King of Morocco addressed in a speech (on television) in the days following the violence in Casablanca and Rabat. He, it is clear, knows "his chickens" well: the whole speech is a kind of sensible and ultimately secular and pragmatic homily, dominated by the anaphora: "Dear people... dear people... dear people... .». A saddened reproach for the violence, a reminder of one's royal merits, some teasing, as pathetic as an Arab popular song, against the parliamentary institutions; and in general, a not unpleasant air of a man who is mild and wise in his own way. The underlying theme, of course, was a horrible reactionarism, based, like all degenerate Machiavellianism, on a form of hypocrisy. That is, the King addressed real Moroccans, with a certain psychological wisdom: he did not mystify them (as dictators do, let's say Mussolini, who spoke to completely non-existent Italians): he did not mystify them, but he saw them in a single moment and in one dimension only. Perhaps, being Moroccan himself, from an ancient family that has governed Moroccans for two centuries, he cannot objectively have the detachment necessary to see the psychology of his "dear people" in a non-particularistic context. In reality there is the "other moment" of the Moroccan, which is a kind of trance: the one in which the Moroccan manages to burn policemen alive, for example, the one in which he takes hashish, the one, constant in his day, of the dominion of sensuality: practically it is the moment of the evaporation of the personality in a kind

of raptus produced by a centuries-old intellectual stagnation - the degeneration of Islamism, the rotting of peasant civilization, isolation, bestial exploitation, etc. etc. As always in these cases, man defends himself by no longer wanting to be a man, vanquishing himself in meekness or in infantile and somewhat animalistic violence. At this stage of their psychology, the "dear people" listen to the King's words for what they are, a soporific song, a senseless iterative composition, only psychacogic and very satisfyingly devoid of logic.

n. 16, 22 April 1965

## THE REASONS FOR NON-LOVE

I read his subject entitled The Eagle and I found an accentuated Francophobia, which after all I have not noticed in his critical and literary positions until today. I don't understand in concrete terms what the allegory of the French tamer is trying to demonstrate, whose efforts to tame the eagle are not only in vain but in the end he himself changes into an eagle. His Francophobia goes so far as to define "pernacchiette" as that small characteristic puff with which the French have the habit of underlining certain sentences. But what is more serious, what does injustice to France, to its universal culture and its traditional generosity is that you put all the French in the same bag, as if nothing that is French deserves, I won't say admiration, but at least esteem. and understanding. In fact, in the pantheon of your sovereign contempt you place some illustrious representatives of contrasting political currents, from Sartre to Mauriac, from Camus to Claudel.

*Giordano Siviero - Terville (Moselle) - France*

The inferences begin, the easy accusations that start from an isolated detail, rather than from the whole. I don't have anything against France at all, which I consider the center of my culture. I have it, in my episode, against a certain type of secular Parisian intellectual, as the supreme representative of a certain bourgeoisie of the Western world. Furthermore, I have many controversial observations to make about the French culture of these years (but Barthes, Fanon, Lévi-Strauss are French!).

I take this opportunity to take a tour of the cultural horizon, of which the starting point "within me" is essential: that is, my interpretation of a writer born from the Resistance and from the great, and in some way

revolutionary, revision carried out by Italian culture on itself itself in the years following the Resistance.

I don't think that something similar to this revision happened for example in the Eastern nations before communism came to power; or at least nothing of the kind has happened on such scale. In Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Poland, the cultural tradition was similar to the Italian one before the Resistance: a marginal area of the great European centers, especially Paris. Indeed, in some ways, cities like Prague (Prague Cubism, Kafka) or Warsaw were closer to those centers than Italy (of which the extreme provinciality of Catholic hermeticism and Crocean domination is well known). The awareness of the diversity of literature occurred, in the nations of the East, coinciding with the conquest of power by communism. Lukács's great operation itself takes place under the sign of this coincidence. Power and culture together criticized the previous culture: but the two operations are, essentially, irreconcilable. Because the criticism that power operates on a culture lacks concreteness and drama: its dialectic is abstract; as soon as it realizes that something is bad, it eliminates it: it does not have and will never have the courage to experience evil contradictorily; if he decides to forget the past, he does so abstractly, presenting his denial as an "average" of the particular living denials of all citizens of good will, including literati: he will never accept that the past, forgotten, elided, continues in reality to provide modules and forms of thought: if he then accepts it, then he devises formulas that make all this external: for example "the national paths to socialism", which have proven to be flatus vocis (if nationality is to be understood as history, that is, as evil-good, as a brute but concrete reality, as an unforgettable tradition absolutely alien to any revolution, etc.). The coincidence therefore of a "critique of power" and a "critique of culture" to the previous culture is only apparently, and in the first phases, sympathetic: immediately afterwards it reveals its incompatibility. The conflict between culture and power in the socialist states of the East is certainly only one of the problems of the "continuation" of the revolution; but, in our eyes, it is perhaps the main problem. Because the concreteness of cultural problems seen by "cultural people", by poets, can also be presented as a symbol of the concreteness of the problems of the entire people. Furthermore, today, in concrete terms, they have as their direct objective a constitutional modification (the abolition of controls, pre-censorship, censures): that is, they postulate an action. An action that cannot fail to be crowned with

success: but which nevertheless, in the meantime, reveals a profound and restless inability of the men of culture of Eastern countries to know today what they themselves want, what their program of freedom is. The fact, for example, that they are so inclined to formalistic revivals (in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, there is a clandestine passion for the avant-garde: indiscriminate, both for the avant-gardes operating in the world today and for the avant-garde movements of the respective pre-twentieth-century traditions -revolutionary). All this depends, I repeat, on the fact that the intelligence of those countries did not carry out a total revolutionary criticism of the forms of previous culture before the revolution (as instead happened with the Resistance in Italy).

In Spain, in the clandestinity and indifference of a people reduced purely to living, something similar is attempted as in Italy (see Spanish "critical realism", and the strong quantity of revolutionary poetry, even if only, sometimes, and albeit in a pathetically sublime, anti-Franco way).

As for France, in this nation, as in all the "opulent" nations of Northern Europe, there is no continuity from Rimbaud or Flaubert onwards: there has never been a critical revolution, not even a generational one. The concatenation of literary modes has never been interrupted. The hierarchy of values has always been the same, and no division, neither fictitious nor real, has ever discriminated against the French pantheon. There was no real literature of commitment (the Resistance produced works, often stupendous, but stylistically linked to the recent tradition): Sartre's continuous and brilliant essayistic presence was not accompanied by a production so relevant as to constitute a new literary period: the engagement was almost exclusively non-fiction, not creative, etc. In the head of a young man of French Marxist culture there is no moral canon of literary choice: in his pantheon there is Sartre close to Mauriac, «Tel Quel» close to «Clarté»: the hatreds and aversions all occur before the literary operation, in an essayistic or ideological context. The literary work done is judged through taste: and taste has had no interruption from Rimbaud or Flaubert to 1965. The dramatic nature of this contradiction has not come to light; it has remained dormant within the new French generations, who are unable to find the ideological strength to radically overcome their fathers ideologically, to make them decline and die, even if perhaps unfairly from a strictly aesthetic point of view. The pantheon is saturated, but the catalog is still available for new pigeonholing. And no young Frenchman decides to

throw the old gods out of the full pantheon and put in the new ones: in fact, he wouldn't know which criterion to follow, other than that of the literary schools. On the other hand, if a fanatic, in the name of an ideological condemnation borrowed from the Italian research of the 1950s, wanted to make a clean sweep, he would empty the pantheon, which would become tout court a basilica dedicated to Saint Sartre and his constellations. French Marxism did not express a medium cultural force that exercised a revolutionary criticism compared to the culture preceding Marxism. Perhaps because in France there was no possibility of scandal: and nothing stands scandalously in a dialectical relationship with French liberalism.

n. 21, 27 May 1965

## LET'S READJUST THE VIEWFINDER

*Dear Pasolini, I would like to preface the question I would like to ask with a note that concerns your column in general. It seems to me that since you resumed your work for «Vie Nuove» you have been conducting a monologue rather than a dialogue. And this for various reasons: first of all because it deals with topics that are often foreign to the interests of the readers of a popular rotogravure weekly; then because you use a language which - due to being very "proper" - is often inaccessible to most people (I read your controversy at the time with a reader who asked for greater clarity and I agree with you that the best way to be clear is that of saying things with the most appropriate terms: but if this way of expressing oneself is not communicative with readers, isn't it better to adopt a more vulgar prose, as journalists do?); finally, why don't you encourage readers to submit topics and problems to you, even minute ones or ones of immediate interest. The fact is that the first round of articles and responses was much more interesting than the current one.*

*And now here's the question: how do you explain the fact that - after the experience of the Second World War - there are still so many people today who treat the worsening international situation with disinterest? All historians and writers today criticize the fact that Nazi Germany was able to lead to aggression without public opinion in countries not directly threatened being adequately concerned about what was about to happen. Aren't we living an experience today that could prove similar to that of 1939?*

*Lamberto Guidotti - Parma*

Dear friend, I prefer to respond to your letter than to your question (which, of course, I will try to answer, as best I can).

Your letter struck me very much. I read your words one by one, as if I already knew them by heart. I wasn't seeing them for the first time, but I was seeing them again: with the same diabolical fatality that things that happen in dreams sometimes have. Which are double: present and already happened. It means that you told the truth: and the truth always superimposes itself on things as a reality prior to them - which produced them, necessitated them, and determined them.

I don't know what the real reasons are for the lesser interest in this "new round of articles and responses" of mine. Some reasons can be sought within myself. And I am ready, all too ready, to undergo examinations of conscience, even lacerating vivisections. The selfishness that protects me in my real work, for which this «Vie Nuove» column is often a tiring interruption. A certain confusion in my position, which in the simple eyes of many readers of «Vie Nuove» may seem unpleasant (the Gospel etc.). A decline in me of a certain purity and passion - residue of the years of the Resistance, etc. etc. I would be grateful if you answered me, and, from your very objective point of view, helped me understand this obtuseness and this darkness of mine, in my new answers in the column.

Other reasons will have to be sought outside of myself, in the objective situation that governs the relations between left-wing intellectuals and the communist base. There is no doubt that times have changed. Until a few years ago there was a whole system of allusions, of common references, which made even a banal phrase significant, and perhaps even rhetorical. Now that series of allusions and references (in a word, the ontology and eschatology of "Hope") has expired. That much of the irrational that it implied has therefore lost its vitality. We can no longer rely on that strong, fraternal and exhilarating foundation that exists in a common political faith. The whole of capitalist society is in motion: and Marxism is in crisis. I tell you this brutally and in no uncertain terms: because I can only rely on my total critical freedom. In a situation like this, my answers can only be: a) as critical as possible, and therefore difficult, both because they are problematic and because they are specific; b) personal, because the context of Marxism in crisis does not allow me to enter into a current of opinion that is in some way common, and therefore immediately acceptable.

This is why I pose problems that are not very popular among the readers of a magazine: because all Marxism is looking for new popular problems. That is, real. All the problems that were enormously widespread, at every level, in the 1950s are certainly still unresolved, and therefore current: but they are no longer the only ones. Or they put themselves in other terms. Neocapitalist society, in its movement, has shifted its objectives. And we are retrofitting sights and periscopes onto those targets.

What are the real problems that interest the readers of «Vie Nuove»? Outside of conventionality and habit, to which I naturally cannot adapt? Well, from the letters I receive (fewer than two years ago: and this testifies to the truth of your observations), I can't understand it. There is no continuity of interests in them: constant series of problems do not arise. They confusingly embrace everything problematic, or they are irrational testimonies of sympathy or antipathy. And then confusion adds to confusion. Mine as an intellectual aware of the crisis of Marxism in Italy and in the world, and that of the readers of «Vie Nuove», who probably experience this crisis without clear awareness. Naturally, let's be clear, when I talk about a crisis I talk about it as someone who first of all does not shy away from saying what seems true to him, and then as someone who fights and is committed to helping to understand and resolve it. Never have the sirens of the bourgeoisie sung more sweetly, but never has my ideological hatred been stronger than today. Here's what I can tell you, in my partial justification.

As for your specific question, it is one of those questions that makes me lose my mind: I don't know how to put myself in the shoes of those who complain about people's recklessness, nor of those who condemn the irresponsibility of those responsible, nor of those who unmask the warmongers. I don't know how to be a moralist or a demagogue, not even in jest. I could only answer by making a serious political examination of the world situation: but I am not capable of doing so, because I lack the specific tools necessary. If I tell you that the situation does not seem similar to that of 1939, I am only telling you my impression, which I could only demonstrate to you generically. What needs to be said, however, in concrete terms - and therefore without slipping into moralism and demagogy - is one's indignation for the Vietnam War, for the events in San Domingo, for the exasperating perpetuation of the colonialist arrogance of the great

nations capitalists. (But this indignation is felt by all intellectuals and workers in the world: including, in part, Americans!)

n. 22, 3 June 1965

## LEFT-WING PESSIMISM

*Dear Pasolini, I gladly accept your invitation. I believe that you tend to objectify a particular state of mind that makes Marxism appear to be in crisis, while in reality the crisis is within you.*

*If you want, Marxism is perpetually in crisis, in the sense that it is always aimed at continuous becoming, to adapt to historical reality, which itself partly determines when from theory it becomes practice.*

*As you say, it is true that "we can no longer rely on that strong, fraternal or exhilarating basis that exists in a common political faith". But this does not mean - as you seem to imply - that the ideal drive that animated the struggles and action of the communists has disappeared. If anything, it is to be noted with satisfaction that this action has been demystified, becoming more conscious; less emotional and therefore more voluntary.*

In my opinion, you are guilty of presumption in thinking that the readers of «Vie Nuove» «are probably experiencing this crisis (as you call it) without clear awareness». Particularly in Italy, however, it seems to me that the research effort, the attempts at clarification, are not just the prerogative of an elite group, but are a mass phenomenon. In the action that millions of men lead, you will not find two Marxists expressing an identical, perhaps prefabricated, opinion on the great problems of our time or even on individual marginal episodes. Nobody hopes that the judgments will coincide. But this in no way excludes the possibility that in this diversity there may be reasons for unity capable of advancing - in today's reality - the workers' movement. In other words, "we readjust the sights", but not as a tactical expedient. The reality that surrounds us is not foreign to us. We had not foreseen it in detail, we had often considered it as an occasional non-accident phenomenon, underestimating its consequences. But we have never lost our way, we have not moved gropingly towards nebulous objectives... I greet you with affection.

*Lamberto Guidotti - Parma*

Dear Guidotti, thank you for your reply. On which I will observe:

1) It may be that I project an internal crisis of mine outside of myself and objectify it into a non-existent crisis of Marxism. These are very human processes, and I may be determined by them too. In any case, I would like it to be clear that mine is not a political crisis that will damage my relations with Marxism. It is a much larger human crisis (which I have expressed in many poems and in a film). However, the criticisms that I address to some Marxist friends, and sometimes, globally, to the PCI, are, at least in my opinion, constructive. They always start from within and in total good faith and perhaps full of (naive) good intentions. Here, I would like this to be clearly present to my correspondents at «Vie Nuove».

2) Having said this, I must insist on saying that a crisis of Marxism - or it would be better to say of the "Marxist parties" - actually exists, objectively. I will limit myself to listing a series of real data:

a) The violent and sometimes deeply alarming controversy between China and the USSR, which split the traditional "Communist International" in two.

b) The resulting fracture between communist parties of poor or underdeveloped countries and communist parties of industrialized countries.

c) The still partly mysterious deposition of Khrushchev: that is, the fall of a value or a political direction, not yet replaced by another value or another political direction.

d) The bad overcoming of Stalinism in all Marxist parties: occurred either in facts - pragmatically and sentimentally - or in words - rhetorically and fictitiously - not in critical reason. (I have been repeating it for years: an exhaustive examination of the profound historical reasons that made Stalinism possible is still lacking.)

e) The alarming political position of many socialist countries, where communism in power, faced with very serious immediate problems, has forgotten to "continue" the revolution, and has assumed strong, highly centralized positions: so, for example , the situation of writers and intellectuals in general is very difficult, not to say in some cases painful: furthermore, certain petty-bourgeois attitudes that have never completely subsided have been rekindled (for example the small Slovak, Transylvanian, etc. nationalisms that we seem painfully absurd phenomena).

f) The dramatic situation of the PCF, a party which has remained with an archaic political mentality, imbued with a type of rationalism borrowed from liberal civilisation: rigid and moralistic. A symptom of this crisis is the end of the intelligent magazine of the young (Italianized) French communists, «Clarté», an end desired by the communist officialdom.

g) The marginal position to which the PCI has been forced in recent years in Italy: given that the center of the scene has been occupied by a struggle between a possible Laborism (the centre-left) and a nascent conservatism (the Milanese liberalism of the neocapitalism): a symptom of this forced marginal position are the PCI's efforts to reinsert itself in the center of the political struggle: that is, dialogue with Catholicism (tending to overcome the provisional Catholic-socialist alliance) and the prospect of the "single party".

I have listed, as you can see, brutally, some data. I don't make comments. I'll let them speak for themselves. If you think that it is the usual continuous crisis as an infinite evolution, as an infinite need to adapt to the ever new historical reality, etc. etc., you commit a dishonest act with yourself: because by doing so, you nullify the real situation, moving your point of view upwards, like someone who sees things "under the guise, almost, of eternity". A crisis must be suffered for what it is in that moment: it must not be evaded with the awareness that everything is always in crisis! This consciousness is obvious, and serves no purpose.

3) Your letter itself, then, I must say, confirms my opinion that the base has an uncertain awareness of the real crisis, which at this moment, and not generically at all times, troubles the communist parties. At the level of the communist elite and among intellectuals, all that is done is to talk about it, it has almost become a slogan, a flatus vocis, by dint of talking about it: and the "base" knows nothing about it. He continues to play with the old optimism of proto-Marxism etc. etc. Like, sorry, you do. And then I must add that the shadow of accusation of defeatism, towards me, that hangs over your words, even so friendly, is rather ungenerous and unjust. Leave at least one place free for me, in your profoundly optimistic and certainty-filled system, in the thankless role of killjoy!

n. 24, 17 June 1965

## COLLECTIVE COURAGE

Dear Pasolini, you are the 3rd person "who writes in newspapers" to whom I write. You know, I'm an 18 year old girl; at 14 I wrote to Liala, at 16 to Candida, now I'm writing to you. Funny right?

*Don't worry, it's not for love advice, as in the two previous cases, I really believe that at 18, love cannot be advised. I don't know why I'm writing to you: maybe because I'm reckless, think that in 10 days I'll have state exams and I waste my evenings writing to you. Tonight was destined for philosophy, but I started reading «Vie Nuove» and goodbye to studying.*

*As I told you, I'm studying, I don't know how the exams will go, but I was admitted with an 8, so I'm not too scared. I do the fourth master's degree; others judge me to be a strange girl, but I think I am because I don't have the things that normal people have. But this has nothing to do with it.*

*I just want to tell you that my parents sweated blood for this diploma, I too worked hard and made them happy through all the years. Now I'm at the end. At the end of what?*

*After graduating, I will teach, I will be a teacher with no vocation and no escape.*

*Yet I dreamed so much of going to university, of living a different life, of being able to have my say too, but now?*

*That's all: simple, clear, but for me it's terrible.*

*You see, I studied, and I did well, because I studied willingly, because for me studying was my greatest satisfaction.*

*Yesterday my literature teacher told me that I shouldn't stop, "it would be a shame to interrupt your culture like this."*

*Yes, and what should I tell him, that when he explains Dante I feel like I'm dying inside, that when he reads Leopardi I would like to cancel myself, that I would like to know, to know too, that I would like to "do", that I would like to shout it out to my mother who for me is like die stay in this country... but perhaps he knows all this; but he doesn't know that at home I have two old men waiting for my first thousand lire so they can rest a bit, that I'm ashamed to always go to my friends' parties in the same dress, that I would like to offer my boyfriend always scented hair, but Going to the hairdresser is expensive!*

*My father is a communist, it is logical that he is, one of those stubborn communists who only see from that point of view: yet he is not dry, I admire him; he was like me, day by day his ideals collapsed and now, sometimes, I consider him narrow-minded and petty, but I admire him.*

*At 30 he found himself without a job, with 2 children, but he made us study; and it is touching when he tries to explain Marx to me by saying that «in school books, he is not the real Marx».*

*I love him, you understand: it would be enough for me to say to him: "Dad, let me go to university, because I want to study and because I feel like someone who has known a little and wants to know everything" and he would do it, he would even sell his shirt. But can I allow it, tell me, do I have the right to do it?...*

*There are those who tell me that with scholarships you can go to university very well: yes, but I also have to help my brother finish his studies: who will give me the money?*

*But I don't want to make money, I just want to study, but it's an absurd claim in today's society.*

*If, in order to study, one must rely on a social ideology and if this is communism, from today I am a communist.*

*Anna - Certaldo (Florence)*

Dear Anna, you ask me to enter into the delicate tangle that is this moment of your life. I enter as a stranger. Like a tourist who goes to visit a city hit by an epidemic, sure of not getting sick because he has been vaccinated beforehand. Or like a journalist who goes to do an investigation in some neighborhood abandoned to itself, without roads. Both the compassionate tourist and the curious journalist when they resume their journey, will have satisfied their pity and their curiosity. But they will have accomplished a duty that was all in vain. I feel so vain in replying to your much needed letter. Try to consider a certain fatuity of my words as fatal: I don't know you except as much as I can understand from your letter. It's not much, if you then consider that in life, you only really get to know two or three people. And maybe not even!

The first instance advice I would give you (not valid, and this is bad, for you, as you, as an unrepeatable case, but valid in general) is this.

Demand from your father and yourself to continue your studies. Your father will be happy with this claim of yours. I have said it many times in this column: sacrifice and anguish are never a priori, and every time they are faced it is as if it were the first time, and there is no experience, neither ours nor that of others, that is worth anything. Therefore the sacrifice and the economic anguish that you ask of your father will be real, there will be no way to soften them, to evade them. This will probably mean that your

father will not immediately have a clear awareness of "being happy with your request". He will realize it eventually. So all the weight is on your shoulders. But if you really want to study, and for you studying represents a rebellion against the idiotic and cruel necessity that prevents you from doing so, you will succeed.

However, it may be that your desire to study is not so true and sincere. It may be that it is an alibi to mask your dejection and humiliation at not being able to continue studying normally and easily. And then you have to invent in front of yourself the excuse of sacrificing your parents. I am absolutely not reproaching you: I simply want to help you clarify your real position. And then I have to use a certain cruelty (like that of doctors). Therefore, if the desire to study is an alibi, and it is instead simply the passive displeasure of not being able to study, then you have to deal with the situation in another way. That is, by accepting the fact that you are socially qualified to be a teacher: this opens a path for you, and does not preclude you from another.

The path that opens up for you is that of teaching. Now, in the state of abandonment, of misery, of conformism, of confessionalism, in which the Italian school finds itself, being a good teacher is very important. At the end of your career you will be able to say that you have put hundreds and hundreds of kids on the right path, or at least tried to put them on the right path. Can I refer to a personal experience? I too taught middle school for two or three years: I can say that, as a minimum, none of my students are now anti-communists (and many, by family and education, could have been): and many have understood certain essential truths and elementary school that they will carry with them forever.

The path that being a teacher does not preclude you is that of continuing to study on your own. University is only used to get a degree, certainly not to provide culture. You can do it on your own, with your passion, much better than the large percentage of lazy and listless letter subscribers. You can read, read, read, which is the best thing you can do in your youth: and little by little you will feel enriched inside, you will feel that special experience that is culture forming within you.

However, I hope that the first possibility I have raised is the real one. I hope so, because my nature makes me dislike resignations and renunciations.

As for the rest, you have to face the thorny problems of your life as a non-rich girl, courageously. Now, the courage that feeds on itself dries up. Your courage must be part of that act of collective courage which is, for petty bourgeois (like you and I) participating in the class struggle, setting yourself a perspective, I won't say revolutionary, so as not to intimidate you, but harshly and staunchly critical (not moralistic). I affectionately wish you that you have and want to have this courage.

n. 27, 8 July 1965

## IDEOLOGICAL Embezzlement?

*Mr Pasolini, I have never believed in your Marxism and the answers you gave to those young men (I think they are such) who asked you about Marxism in crisis have confirmed my judgement. That others believe you are a Marxist is no big deal; It doesn't hurt that you make a mirror of Marxism for teenagers, but the evil is that you teach.*

*Before talking about the crisis of Marxism (response to Veri, in n. 25 of «Vie Nuove») he must learn that Marxism is a method of research, an orientation, it is not a church nor a dogma, nor a gospel, but a philosophy of story reached conclusions through constant observation (the definition is not mine).*

*Before asserting (reply to Garaboldi) that «clearly distinguishing between the crisis of Marxism and the crisis of Marxist parties is impossible», he must learn that all the Marxist pseudo-parties have had, by logic of things, crises, deviations, denials, small flashbacks -bourgeois because they wanted to adapt a poorly digested Marxism to themselves. (See in Italy: 3, 4 socialist parties and 3, 4 communist parties.)*

*Neocapitalism, dear Sir, has nothing that escapes Marxist analysis because, it should learn, the contradictions of the system do not change even if some institutions «such as the family, religion, the homeland tend to enter into crisis and become null and void» . But these institutions should know, they are abstractions on which capitalism relies, which is an asphyxiating reality when its building shows cracks.*

*You would like to revolutionize the revolutionary idea of the classics of Marxism for the socialist revolutions of underdeveloped countries! But please take off your solar eclipse glasses and study those revolutions in the dazzling light of history. Even the USSR has not yet achieved socialism.*

*Learn, please, the first elements of Marxism, philosophy and materialist conception of history and learn it from Marx, Engels and Lenin.*

*Louis Christmas*

I do not respond directly to Mr. Luigi Natale, because his letter does not require an answer. It is a lesson that is taught to me, with profound dislike. I can't possibly try to prove to him that his antipathy has no reason to exist! And moreover, even the reasons for his cross-examination are so - to use one of his curious words - "cathedrating", that we just have to take note of them.

I attach this letter, so that the reader of «Vie Nuove» is informed about it: and I make some observations.

Just recently a volume by Feltrinelli was released, it's called Twenty Years of Impatience and it's an anthology of Italian fiction edited by Angelo Guglielmi, who is a critic of the neo-avant-garde. The analogy between his introductory essay on my novels and the letter attached here is curious. Both of these interventions are based on a profound antipathy towards me, and use a blackmail weapon against me: that is, they accuse me of not being a Marxist. Guglielmi even accuses me of "ideological embezzlement", because, according to him, my novels remain naturalistic or decadent products, to which Marxism has added nothing. All this is not only unfair, but it is silly, and reveals Guglielmi's complete ineptitude at reading a text. I mean that if the plot of A Violent Life is the story of a boy, who, having been born in a filthy sub-proletarian suburb, is first a fascist thug, then a thug tout court, then (having his family had the chance to go to living at the Ina-case) a pathetic lower-middle-class snob (Christian Democrat), and finally, following hospitalization in a sanatorium and the experience of a trade union struggle taking place in the same sanatorium, he becomes a communist (an unrealistic, non-palingenetic communism , but nevertheless revealing of a moral and a perspective) - I don't see how one can speak of "naturalism" in relation to such a crudely ideological story. If ever there was a closed, constructed, thesis-based novel, this is A Violent Life. It is true that, page by page, it is absolutely open, free, it mimics the progression of the tranches de vie. In short, it was born on the page. But this happens because I only know how to write as a poet, not as a novelist. This could externally support Guglielmi's other accusation, that of decadentism. But this is not true.

The "artistic" page serves me, through its "expressive" linguistic contamination between dialect and cultured language, to descend into a psychology absolutely different from the petty-bourgeois one (which is the only one that the racist Guglielmi can conceive: and with him all his "integrated" colleagues): that is, to live "another vital experience". Here, it seems curious, I believe lies the true substance of my Marxism. All bourgeois literature, as Goldmann says, is "homologous" to bourgeois society. For a bourgeois it is impossible to escape this "homology" which somehow transcends him. A bourgeois Marxist can therefore only focus, as a writer, on the "will to be Marxist": it is this will that can contradict structural homology. Where this will comes from in me is very complicated and difficult to explain: it is certainly initially a purely negative act, a profound hatred for the bourgeoisie (if my decadentism is cultural, it is first of all psychological, due to my particular traumas) etc. . etc. But, in this case, in my novels this "will to be Marxist" has been invested in a realistic idea of the novel: the naturalism and decadentism persistent in the operation are merely two false technical moments. The first is only apparent (realism cannot fail to recover a certain idea of objectivity), the second is nothing but a desperate means - the only one that I historically had in hand - to be able to live that different vital experience, which petty-bourgeois, racist and classist writers cannot even conceive. (So much so that they remove the problem of the Italian underclass and underdeveloped peoples: having no other solution for it than an ideological concentration camp.)

But, apart from all these considerations - and this is the point - the idea that Mr. Guglielmi has of Marxism seems curious to me, not unlike Mr. Natale in this. Do these murky antagonists of mine believe that Marxism is a form of palingenesis? A drug to enter Marxist paradise? Such an absolute moral idealization of Marxism serves both the falsifications of the fascists and the moralistic blackmail of the Stalinists (or worse).

But Marxism is neither a magic drug nor a normative morality: by pretending to believe this, Guglielmi and Natale accuse me of not being a Marxist, since I have not been cured of bourgeois evil, nor do I follow a moral-ideological normative nature in my works. alleged Marxist. All this is profoundly ungenerous, indeed even petty and dangerous. A bourgeois writer who becomes a Marxist, and works as such throughout his life, does not thereby cease to be immune from bourgeois evil. He does not lose his previous and real life for a mystical asceticism of a "perfect Marxist". The

important thing is that the "will to be Marxist" is valid in him: this is true liberation in progress, without end and without rest. So much so that through this will in a writer, both a certain superficial naturalism and a certain profound decadentism can be exploited and partly torn away from the iron law of homology.

All this is just a pretext to come and talk about the crisis of Marxism in the cultural field - which is what I am responsible for. Which I plan to do in the next issue.

n. 29, 22 July 1965

## CULTURE AFTER THE «COMMITMENT»

Dear Mr. Pasolini, some time ago I wrote to you about your Gospel according to Matthew, not to discuss the film, of which you always said you had enough, but to hear your ethical judgment on the Gospels in general. She courageously did not respond to this letter and has every right to do so, even if the duty of someone who runs a column has to respond to the most obscure stranger. Now I am writing to you again about the alleged crisis of Marxism that you so vaunted. By associating myself with what Mr. well said to you. Luigi Natale (whom I don't know and I don't know who you are), you believe you can give lessons and judgments on everything and everyone; but you are wrong, dear Mr Pasolini, as today's Italian thinks with his own head and not with that of someone who is paid to direct a column.

*If Marxism is in crisis, how can we explain that Marxism is spreading to two-thirds of humanity? How can we explain the struggle of the proletariat and the independence of peoples? Isn't it Marxism that has condemned colonialism forever? It is not thanks to the Marxist idea if nations such as China, Egypt, Cuba, Algeria, etc. etc. have they nationalized their economies? England itself, home of Adam Smith, the most conservative nation in the world, has resorted to some nationalizations, waiting to do others. Tell me, Mr. Pasolini, what do you think of these observations of mine? Therefore, if there is a crisis, it is not in Marxism, but in the political parties that do not know how or do not want to apply true Marxist dialectics (see revisionism of Khrushchevite's bad memory and its consequences).*

And since I'm here I still want to tell you one thing. You leave politics and continue to be interested in novels, poetry and film subjects, since few

people are willing to follow you in that direction. Do you want proof? Launch a referendum on «Vie Nuove» and you will be convinced. If you want, you can also trash this letter, but whoever runs a column must have the civil courage to deal with any topic that is asked of them.

*Attilio Micale - Pescara*

I'll let the reader judge for himself how much is bad in this letter. It is an extreme case that I take as a pretext for an answer which, even without covering the entire "Vie Nuove", as Micale would seem to claim, is useful for deepening our theme of these last few weeks.

From the immediate post-war period to the beginning of the 1960s, the literary motif in Italy was unique, and so deeply identified that it almost founded a form of civilization: it was called commitment. Its ideal reference was the Resistance and its aim was to "reveal" a hitherto mystified reality, Italian society. It presupposed a sort of elastic dogmatism, projected towards the future: perspective, or, more sentimentally, hope. Here you are. An entire chapter of our history and our literature was based on these data - which are external, "textbook" data.

The situation was chaotic, because on the one hand it allowed the breath of freedom and discovery (Italian cinema and the novel were born in those years) on the other it lent itself to moralistic rigidities, to blackmail radicalism. All the average Marxist criticism of that period accepted the data I have outlined above as valid: they constituted the cultural "line" of the party. But precisely for this reason - for being in possession of a line - there was always in such criticism the danger of moralistic rigidity and blackmail radicalism.

A sort of essentially Manichaeistic scale of values had formed in the head of the Marxist critic: so that he applied a monotonous critical scheme to a text to the point of obsession: he asked himself (external) questions to which he gave (external) answers and the value judgment, finally, was always moralistic. He wondered if a work was populist, humanitarian, Christian-oriented, etc. etc.: if it was such, it should be condemned. If he, on the other hand, responded to a certain work-related spirit, if the optimistic perspective was explicit, etc. etc., then it should be exalted.

Naturally I am speaking of the minor Marxist criticism, of the great mass, not of the more refined and problematic one. However, it should be noted that this moralism has been preserved today by accumulating in the most rigid and in a certain sense pure part of the Marxist alignment, let's say in

the cultural politics of the PSIUP or in that of certain discontented Marxists, disdainful and unknown "small companies", who in their moralistic maximalism, condemn everything and everyone (perhaps rightly: but their wrong is the obsessive reference to their being right). I am referring, for example, to the «Quaderni Piacentini» group, where the group of the best and worst Marxist critics took refuge: beatnik Stalinism (which is also typical of many avant-garde groups, to act as a screen for a old bourgeois anarchism).

Officially, however, the PCI - having fallen and having passed the decade of commitment, Reality and Hope - with the Resistance more commemorated than remembered - has abandoned any protective, dogmatic, parenetic and moralistic attitude.

The cultural paragraph of the 10th Congress of the PCI gives carte blanche to all possible literary experiments: "Do what you want, then we'll see" we read between the lines of that paragraph. A sort of cultural liberalism, an official declaration of a total lack of programs and ideas, a complete availability.

Apparently this liberalization presents itself as a consequence of the Khrushchevite and anti-Stalinist period. But if you look carefully, in that paragraph there is an ontologization of freedom (the artist is free to make the attempts he believes: but a freedom without comparison is a mythical freedom, it is the freedom of bourgeois liberalism, a freedom, finally, pretextual ); secondly, the failure to declare new cultural programs, or, if we want, a new cultural "line", does not guarantee real freedom of judgment at all. Indeed, the militant Marxist critic, who must write his piece every day, is, by this paragraph of the he knows what to want and what to require from a writer.

Here is therefore a sign of crisis: indeed, a real crisis of Marxist cultural politics. "Committed" realism has fallen, and in its place, Italian and non-Italian Marxism has not been able to develop anything new. He deferred the development of something new to the "from scratch" attempts of writers, adopting the "tactic" of liberalization.

Hence the interest and tactical support for the "avant-gardes". Which is simply monstrous. It would be as if the politicians of the PCI expected useful social and political ideas from the new sociology, which stands compared to the old sociology of Durkheim or Weber, exactly as the new avant-gardes stand compared to the avant-gardes of the first Nocevento.

n. 34, 26 August 1965

# ANOTHER FAREWELL

I must say goodbye once again to the readers of «Vie Nuove». This time too, however, it is a temporary leave. I will start shooting the new film in a few days (and my irregularity in writing the column in recent weeks is due to the preparation of this film): and during the period in which "we are shooting" the time for a director becomes a monstrous dimension , filled with an unpredictable range of occupations. However, in a certain sense, while the other time - almost two years ago - interrupting the «Vie Nuove» column, I moved on to a completely new and unexpected job, that is, the execution of the Gospel, this time, in a certain sense, with Uccellacci and birds, I continue elsewhere, in another venue and with other means, my dialogue with the readers of «Vie Nuove». Meanwhile, the three episodes, or Aesopian fables, of which Uccellacci and birds is composed, were published, in their first draft, as soon as they were conceived, in «Vie Nuove»: perhaps leaving readers quite disconcerted, but nevertheless not departing from the themes of the dialogue . In the first episode the theme is the relationship between rationalism - perhaps even advanced, and perhaps even Marxist - and "wild thinking": that is, between the West and the Third World. This relationship presents itself as the most difficult and "scandalous" of our time and its failure to resolve it was the cause - at least partial -, for example, of Stalinism. In this case it was a question of a wrong approach, within the same revolutionary nation, of the problem of the peasants (belonging to the "Third World", serfs or children of serfs - like Stalin - and endowed with a mentality whose main characteristic is not the petty-bourgeois ideological influence, but a surviving, archaic, "wild" religiosity - from which an aberration such as the "cult of personality" is historically made possible). In my episode all this is greatly simplified, of course: it's a comic fable. But its ideological basis is this.

The other "ideocomic" (do we want to call it that?), always has as its basis a religious problem (the one before which certain secular fanatics get irritated, impatient and exasperated to the point of an angry and irrational reaction: an indication of repressed religiosity!) but in a much more accessible and elementary way: a certain generic universalism of the Church is criticized, which ignores that men are divided into social classes,

and that therefore there are sins that transcend the individual: who, thus, is an automaton of an "evil" of which he is not aware.

It is above all the third episode that should interest the readers of «Vie Nuove». In it the theme is precisely that "crisis of Marxism" which has kept us busy in these columns in recent months. There are a father and a son walking on the outskirts of a big city, in a world under construction, where the old city structures (ruins, poor people's houses, old-fashioned buildings) are replaced with new structures (of which we can only see for now only the construction sites): at a certain point a chatty crow approaches the two, who, accompanying them, interprets the reality that they live innocently or unconsciously: his interpretation, very wise, is in a Marxist key: but, although very advanced, that Marxism is the typical Marxism of the 1950s - it still ignores the new empirical wave that has swept the world. The two mysterious "eternal" men, father and son, who go, listen to him and - as always happens with ideologies - learn from him that elementary minimum that the great masses choose from complex intellectual debates. Finally, tired, they pull the crow's neck, eat it, and continue on their way. Towards where?

The observations that I made here on «Vie Nuove» in a polemical, dramatic and often probably a little abrupt manner, on the «crisis of Marxism», are carried out comically in this episode. I really hope that my «Vie Nuove» correspondents who go to see it will have fun and laugh. It may be that this puts them in a more suitable state of mind to accept observations and facts, which, by breaking habits and illusions, are painful. And they "feel" that my criticism is not only negative and pessimistic, but that it is all done with a reconstructive function. I speak of the crisis of Marxism - without mincing words, without false human respect and without diplomacy - because I would sincerely like to see it resolved. And it is at this point that I must add that the suspension of my column is due not only to the work of Uccellacci e birdsi but also to another work: that of the preparation, with Moravia, of a new series of the magazine «Nuovi Argomenti» - as I mentioned here in my last letter. Which will be first of all and above all a contribution to the clarification, exact formulation and search for a solution to the crisis of Marxism.

## THE FIGURE OF THE WRITER

If then, to conclude this new farewell letter of mine - which is a "see you again" - I were to add some considerations on the work done, I would say that objectively it was infinitely more difficult than a few years ago. And this is partly due to the conditions that have actually changed, due to the different role of the PCI in Italian life and the different course of Marxism in the life of the world: for which the figure of the writer "fellow traveller" or comrade tout court, has profoundly changed . While in the fifties he was a sort of guardian of the sacred fire, and the allusion, between him and the mass of worker readers, was to the common hope of men, now this allusion seems to have lapsed: even if many comrades from the base still do not want realize it, and therefore continue, in their conscience, to expect from a writer that type of conversation and solidarity that they expected a few years ago. On the other hand, a new "figure" of the writer has not yet emerged: needs are still fluctuating. It can be said that through the column of «Vie Nuove» I found myself experiencing this passage as if in corpore vili. This has naturally made both myself and the readers of «Vie Nuove» dissatisfied many times.

All in all however, if I had to choose between the two phases of my collaboration, in which I experienced two different types of the figure of the writer in relations with the base of a party, I would choose this second phase: because it is more operational and sincere.

n. 39, 30 September 1965

# From “Il chaos” on «Tempo»

## 1968

Why did I agree to write this column for «Tempo»?

It's a question I ask myself, rather than to respond in advance to those who, with like or dislike, will ask it to me.

There are many reasons: the first is my need to disobey Buddha. Buddha teaches detachment from things (to use Western language) and disengagement (to continue with gray Western language): two things that are in my nature. But there is in me, precisely, an irresistible need to contradict this nature of mine.

Naturally, such a need to contradict myself also needs justification. All my conformism dictates these justifications to me, which is very difficult, moreover, to define, being a phenomenon with a damned composite and ambiguous character (it perhaps has its most compatible points of contact with a certain communist conformism, as it presented itself in the post-war period: something, therefore, almost as distant as my childhood).

## THE WHY FOR THIS COLUMN

The justifications, in any case, that my enigmatic conformism dictates to me - regarding this weekly commitment that I have made - are very simple: I invoke to justify myself the "civil" necessity of intervening, in the small and daily struggle, to proclaimed that which in my opinion is a form of truth. I say straight away that it is not an affirmative truth: it is rather an attitude, a feeling, a dynamic, a practice, almost a gesture: it therefore cannot fail to be full of errors, and perhaps even of some stupidity (at this admission, I can already feel the sneer of the journalists who have become my colleagues from now on). I vaguely know that my work, both literary and cinematographic, places me, almost ex officio, in the ranks of public persons. Well, here it is: I refuse, in the meantime, to behave like a public person. If I have obtained some authority, badly, through that work of mine, I am here to completely call it into question: as I have always tried to do. It could be said that my effort is useless; that there are certain powers that, once achieved, must be held on to; that there is no possibility of resignation;

and that I, therefore, having obtained a certain, albeit minimal and discussed, power of prestige - through poems, novels, films and willing linguistic and semiological essays - inevitably belong to an undifferentiated "AUTHORITY": no more and no less than as someone he looked for it on purpose: a bureaucrat, a politician, a carabinieri general, a professor, an industrialist. A young person who opens his eyes today to the (cultural) light cannot fail to see me included in this sort of paternal AUTHORITY that dominates him. Well, I don't want to admit it.

This is why this column will not have - at least in my intentions - anything authoritative, and I will have no scruples in writing it: no fear, I mean, of contradicting myself, or of not protecting myself enough.

At this point I believe that the reason why I wanted to title these weekly pages of mine "Chaos" is also clear, the ideal subtitle of which could be: "Against terror": authority, in fact, is always terror, even when it is Sweet. A father says sweetly, comradely to a young child: "Do not tread on the flowerbeds": well, this negative commandment will become part of a set of negative commandments that will regulate that child's behavior; so that good education, being largely based on a series of negative rules, is, by its nature, terrorist: in fact it, almost as if to compensate for the sacrifices of obedience, immediately becomes a right, and, in the name of this right, the well-educated child, once grown up, will exercise his moral blackmail.

I took this example of mine from the Heart or Talmud of the bourgeois world: which is, in some way, the world. But there are terrorism on the right, clerical-fascist, in this world; and terrorism on the left. And I'm not just talking about Stalinist terrorism (the definition of the "perfect Marxist" fashionable among the red Jesuits of the 1950s), but also about the terrorism of the new left (the extremist snobbery of certain PSIUP followers is the worst thing that the Italian bourgeoisie after fascism).

## NO AGREEMENT OR DEAL

I am not an indifferent, and I don't even like what is (hypocritically) called an independent position. If I am independent, I am independent with anger, pain and humiliation: not a priori, with the calm of the strong, but by force. And therefore if I prepare - in this column, the fringe of my activity as a writer - to fight, as I can, and with all my energy, against every form of terror, it is, in reality, because I am alone. Mine is not indifference or

independence: it is solitude. And it is this, after all, that guarantees me a certain, perhaps crazy and contradictory, objectivity. I have no one behind me who supports me and with whom I have common interests to defend. The reader certainly knows that I am a communist: but he also knows that my relationships as a fellow traveler with the PCI do not imply any mutual commitment (and indeed, they are quite tense: I have as many adversaries among the communists as among the bourgeois, etc.). If I have political sympathies (certain radicalism - but not so much that of «Espresso» - on the one hand, and certain Catholic New Left, which is taking shape, much more under the sign of Don Milani than of John XXIII) they are sympathies that they do not involve any agreement or plea bargain.

The editor of this magazine remains who, evidently, is a capitalist. But, early on, just yesterday, a Moroccan student, one of the leaders of the "22 May" movement, told me that we must take advantage of the current type of production, until there is another one. And we, after all, read Marx and Lenin because they were published by bourgeois capitalist publishers.

Personally, therefore, I behave with Tofanelli, the director of this magazine, and Palazzi, the publisher, as one would behave with friends: outside of personal relationships, however, I reserve the right to behave cynically with them.

A reader who has followed me up to this point, with a little attention, will be surprised by this expression, "cynically", which has nothing to do with what I have said so far, above all with the feeling with which I said it. In fact, I am not cynical in any way: and my desire to be cynical even has something funny about it, it is so disproportionate and incompatible with my person.

## A VERY CONTAGIOUS DISEASE

But this adverb "cynically" refers to my public, not personal, behavior: it is an ideological statement: I take advantage of capitalist structures to express myself: and I do so, therefore, cynically (towards the public figures of my "employers" , not towards their personal identity).

Another thing I would like to say as a preface to this series of speeches of mine is the following: I will often speak violently against the bourgeoisie: indeed, this will be the central theme of my weekly speech. And I know very well that the reader will be "disconcerted" (is that what they say?) by

this fury of mine: well, the thing will be clear when I have specified that by bourgeoisie I don't mean so much a social class as a real disease. A very contagious disease: so much so that it has infected almost all those who fight it: from the northern workers, to the immigrant workers from the South, to the bourgeois in the opposition, to the "lonely" (like me). The bourgeois - let's say it wittily - is a vampire, who is not at peace until he bites his victim on the neck for the pure, simple and natural pleasure of seeing her become pale, sad, ugly, devitalized, twisted, corrupt, restless, full of guilty, calculating, aggressive, terrorist, like him.

## WHERE IS THE INTELLECTUAL?

How many workers, how many intellectuals, how many students have been bitten by the vampire at night and, without knowing it, they too are becoming vampires!

The moment has therefore come in which it is no longer sufficient to recognize the bourgeoisie as a social class, but as a disease: by now, recognizing it as a social class is also ideologically and politically wrong (even if it is done through the tools of the purest and most intelligent Marxism -Leninism). In fact, the history of the bourgeoisie - through a technological civilization that neither Marx nor Lenin could have foreseen - is now, concretely, about to coincide with the entire history of the world. Is this bad, or is it good? Neither one thing nor the other, I think; I don't want to pronounce oracles. It's simply a fact. However, I think it is necessary to have an awareness of bourgeois evil, to intervene effectively on this fact, and contribute to ensuring that it is a little more positive than negative.

From my solitude as a citizen, I will therefore try to analyze this bourgeoisie as evil wherever it is found: that is now almost everywhere (it is a "lively" way of saying that the bourgeois "system" is capable of absorbing every contradiction: indeed, it creates itself the contradictions, as Lukács says, to survive, overcoming itself). A sure symptom of the presence of bourgeois evil is precisely terrorism, moralistic and ideological: even in its naive forms (for example among students).

With this, I know, I am getting myself into a thankless and desperate undertaking; but it is natural, it is fatal, after all, that, in a civilization in which a gesture, an accusation, a position is more important than a years-long literary work, a writer chooses to behave in this way. He must also try

to be present, at least pragmatically and existentially, if in theory his presence seems unprovable! In a beautiful essay by Rossana Rossanda (The Year of the Students, De Donato editore), I find myself in front of an image of the intellectual that takes my breath away. Describing the difference that, in the act of becoming aware of bourgeois injustice, divides the classical intellectual (i.e. the humanist who led the Resistance) from the students, Rossanda observes how the students experience in their own person and in their own condition the misery of commodification and alienation: while the intellectual does not: he limits himself to being a witness to it: in it, simply, «it is a question of the awakening of a conscience to the reasons of a class that is not his own, and the position of companion of the street, with its margins of freedom and its conflicts, its irreducible otherness as an external witness".

Expelled, as a traitor from the centers of the bourgeoisie, an external witness to the working world: where is the intellectual, why and how does he exist?

n. 32, 6 August 1968

## THE CASE OF AN INTELLECTUAL

I concluded the first chapter of this column of mine, like a mystery novel, with a question: "Where is the intellectual, why and how does he exist?".

In fact, I was saying, the intellectual is expelled from the centers of the bourgeoisie (and relegated to the ghetto where the poets, perhaps authoritative, are), and, for the working world, he is nothing but an external witness (according to the definition, which I quoted, of Rossana Rossanda, in her essay The Year of the Students).

A question like this is possible and strangely relevant only today. A decade or less ago, the answer would have been simple and immediate: "The intellectual is a spiritual guide of the working aristocracy and also of the cultured bourgeoisie." He was, in short, an authority: an opposition authority. It was in fact the PCI - the flourishing and still unassailable post-war one, which had just emerged from the Resistance - which determined and decreed the literary success of an author. Italy was then a poor (paleocapitalist) country: and the man of letters could easily assume, as still today in poor and uncultured countries, the "national" function of guide, poet, albeit very modern, and perhaps honorary citizen of Paris . Now, the

cultural hegemony, which was held by the PCI for about twenty years, has passed into the hands of industry.

So the answer to that question of mine could be, today, the following: «The intellectual is where the cultural industry places him: why and how the market wants him».

## THE REFUSAL OF BRAIBANTI

In other words, the intellectual is no longer the spiritual guide of a people or bourgeoisie in struggle (or just returning from a struggle), but to put it bluntly, is he the fool of a people and a bourgeoisie? at peace with their conscience and therefore looking for pleasant escapes.

In reality, both answers concern an "average" and therefore abstract intellectual: and, furthermore, they evade the real destination of the question. To which I myself, moreover, would not be able to respond, except by resorting to existential terms that I know are dangerous and inept.

I know this, however: that the author's authority as a spiritual guide, comrade in struggle, etc. has expired, declining with the historical period in which it was born (an author of that type could exist today in Nasser's Egypt, or in India), while the author's authority as a storyteller for the bourgeoisie is an ignoble fact, after all destined to pass quickly, as soon as Italy is truly an advanced and rich country, and, therefore, the cultural industry will produce its goods outside of literature: so that the two different products will have two different distribution channels.

Braibanti is a case of an intellectual who early rejected the authority that would have come from being a writer of communist, or left-wing, cultural hegemony; and he then rejected, naturally, the authority of a writer created by the culture industry.

This second observation would seem obvious: however it is not. In fact, the writer dear to the cultural industry is not only the writer who produces false beautiful novels, which perhaps talk about Vietnam: but he is (or was until yesterday) also the avant-garde writer. Indeed, the first writers to be "power" writers, completely invented and launched by the cultural industry, were precisely the avant-garde writers (the recently defunct Gruppo '63). Now Braibanti is indeed an avant-garde writer: yet he was not part of the noisy, foolish and terrorist groups who sought who knows what power (which they then obtained, through complete integration either in industry

or in the PCI). So much so that one of these avant-garde writers, the idiot, replied to those who asked him to do something for Braibanti: «I don't think about Braibanti, I think about Vietnam». Where it is clear that there are daily - and terrorist - escapes into Vietnam.

## THE CRIME OF BEING ALONE

Braibanti has not committed the slightest act of terrorism, ever. His presence in literature has always been intelligent, discreet, devoid of vanity, incapable of intrusiveness. Personally, I don't like his poetic texts very much, because I don't love avant-garde literature, whatever it is, today: but this is my personal opinion, probably even wrong. But what Braibanti produces, I am ready to take into consideration and esteem: it in fact "proposes itself", like all true research, it does not impose itself. He doesn't know what it means to impose himself.

If there is a "meek" man in the purest sense of the term, it is Braibanti: in fact he never relied on anything or anyone; he never asked or demanded anything.

So what crime did he commit to be condemned through the pretextual accusation of plagiarism?

His crime was his weakness. But he chose and wanted this weakness for himself, rejecting any form of authority: authority, which, as an author, in some way, would have come naturally to him, only if he had accepted even to a minimal extent any common idea of the intellectual: or the communist one or the bourgeois one or the Catholic one, or the simply literary one... Instead he refused to identify with any of these - ultimately buffoonish - intellectual figures.

From this solitude came his weakness, and from his weakness his authority: therefore the most dangerous authority of all.

Now, some petty-bourgeois Italians feel calm in the face of any form of scandal, if this scandal has any form of public opinion or power behind it; because they immediately recognize, in such a scandal, a possibility of institutionalization, and, with this possibility, they fraternize.

## THE FEAR OF SCANDAL

However, when faced with a man's scandal, they experience all the terror of the scandal. Old, ancestral aggressions, certainly unknown to themselves, are freely unleashed in them (I am not aware that there are any courses in the Faculty of Law that concern psychoanalysis, or in any case any subject of the human sciences: in Law one is culturally an old humanist) , and therefore they condemn: lightly, because scandal is scandal. Just as Jews, Poles, communists, pederasts and gypsies were a living scandal for the SS. In short, in Italy there still exist those that Himmler defined once and for all, weak and alone, existences unworthy of being lived.

I am silent, because I am terrified myself. But to make the reader understand how profound and distressing this phenomenon is, I will redirect my indignation: and I will take it out on the person responsible for justice matters of the «Giorno», lawyer Alberto Dall'Ora, who, speaking on the Braibanti case, defense, said that it was necessary to forgive Braibanti, because Braibanti was a sick person, and that if anything it was necessary to subject him to the same treatments as one of the plagiarists: electroshocks, insulin shocks, and a ban on reading books published in the last hundred years!

## CODE REFORM

Enzo Forcella intervened against a similar gaffe by Dall'Ora: who tried to remedy it, but, in my opinion, making his situation even worse: which turns out to be that of a petty bourgeois frightened by the scandal, who, in this case, it is homosexuality, and which, even to him, unconsciously, appears as an element that "makes life unworthy of living". In fact, he makes up for his own gaffe by saying that the homosexual is a "recoverable patient": thereby maintaining the separation, and allowing homosexuals to leave the ghetto, only in view of the fact that they can be used in some way by society: it is the utilitarianism which therefore masks the remission of sin: that is, it is a temporary peace with one's conscience, which fiercely defends the norm in itself against everything that calls it into question.

Why did I write this article, when I know that everyone, after reading it, and perhaps after sharing many ideas, will remove it from their memory, will empty it of continuity? When I know that no one actually wants to know anything about Braibanti?

Well, the fact remains that the Braibanti case involves the problem of the reform of the Italian Code. Here: at least the awareness of this problem remains in the reader's memory; and as a problem that concerns him, given that, regarding the terrible fate of Braibanti, the spirit of conservation is infinitely stronger than any charity.

n. 33, 13 August 1968

## A HATE THAT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE

In the Dogs of Sinai (De Donato editore) Fortini makes, in the body of his speech, personal and not very clear, on the war between Israel and the Arabs, an observation: in the future racism will increase in intensity and frequency, rather than decrease: and this is due to the pressure of a power, which, being less visible and personal, will however not be less crushing: indeed, it will be so crushing that it will shatter and pulverize the community that acts as the connective tissue to the production and consumption process; this pulverization of society into many different, equally oppressed forms will precisely cause racism to multiply, because all the small separate parts, into which the crushed world will shatter, will racially hate each other.

It is a racial hatred that is difficult to imagine.

It is, in general, difficult, even now, when it exists with such fury, and we have only just survived it, to imagine what racial hatred is. It is, in reality, made up of many different and sometimes even contradictory racial hatreds.

There is a first historical level - which has remained the popular one - in which racial hatred is magical: and, as such, survives in each of us (who, in our deep layers, remain prehistoric and popular). This type of racial hatred is the only one that is quite possible to imagine, and which is also, in some way, justifiable, given that it precedes the phase of reason.

Our "antipathies" for certain types of people, the violent annoyance that certain "bodies" give us, are archetypes of such racial hatred, which we feel, even in a incomplete or embryonic way, and which therefore falls under the dominion of our experience.

## THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF THE SUN

All the remaining framework of racial hatred is part of a social background, which a person equipped with the use of reason finds it

difficult to believe actually exists. In this historical moment, it seems to me that racial hatred is the hatred that a bourgeois feels towards a peasant: that is, the hatred that a man integrated into a type of modern and urban civilization feels, against a man who represents a type of precedent of civilization, which still threatens the presence of the current one: physically demonstrating that a regression is always possible (socially). This is why blacks are racially hated, because they are poor, and the poor, because they are inevitably different in skin, being employed in ancient jobs that necessarily involve the open air and the sun (the effect of the sun on the skin seems to have a decisive value in the racial hatred of those who live in civilian homes, and, if they work in the countryside, do so as masters, or industrially).

Blacks, Southern Europeans, Sardinian bandits, Arabs, Andalusians, etc.: they all have in common the fault of having their faces burned by the peasant sun, by the sun of ancient times.

But, to return to Fortini, and his observation on the pulverization of society due to power and the multiplication of racism, perhaps, in our days - and precisely in these last days - something has fallen beforehand in the circle of our direct experience.

In fact, in certain strata that were considered very well stabilized in society, a pulverization occurred due to the subversive movement of students: these are very particular strata: that is, the strata of the intellectual elites (we know, extremely sensitive and vulnerable).

n. 34, 20 August 1968

## THE WORLD SAVED BY KIDS

Can we talk about injustice regarding the lack of "great" critical and sales success of Elsa Morante's World Saved by the Kids?

Let's be clear: there was sales and critical success, but it was normal. While Morante's book represents an exceptional event.

It is true that it is not a rare case that an exceptional poetic event goes unnoticed or is welcomed in a climate of normal administration. But I have a particular "case" in front of me, and I don't want to generalize, and make Greek cries about human injustices and their fatality. Fatality does not exist, or it exists to the extent that an author (in the case of a book) causes it. In short, Italian criticism has never shone with particular brilliance: in recent years, one can even say that it is literally "over". Young people run after

stupid chimeras, imposed terroristally, and everything that doesn't "know" about these intimidating innovations is left aside, not even accepted. The elderly, partly due to terrorism itself, partly follow the young, partly are completely in the hands of the cultural industry. Even the minority of free spirits, whose presence must also be registered in Italy, has an ambiguous air: that is, it is not the "true" minority of free spirits, it only has its appearance, characteristics, code; in reality it is also automatic, and does everything that a minority of free spirits must do; the scandals are all, how shall I say?, preordained, they happen under the blessing of the ghetto, rather than under the blessing of power; that's all. Morante's book presents itself outside of all these cultural schemes; no one is, therefore, ready to welcome him; and it arouses obvious admiration, even obvious adoration.

Literarily it is something unrecognizable: there is nothing in the Italian tradition, even recent, that resembles it or that it recalls (a little of Palazzeschi, just barely, and a little of Russian formalism; but they are psychological and ultra-historical analogies , non-cultural). This naturally makes reading Morante difficult, indeed, impossible. It cannot help but please, but it pleases, so to speak, unconsciously. Perhaps the excessive pleasure that reading this book gives, always unconsciously, makes it appear as something not very serious, a delight and that's it. Instead, Morante's book is even a political manifesto. The political manifesto, I might say paradoxically, of that new left which in Italy seems unable to exist, grow, immediately sinking back into the old indifference and complementary moralism. A political manifesto written with the grace of a fairy tale, with humour, with joy (this is why I said before that if there is a fatality in the destiny of a book, it is desired by the author: Morante in fact did not want to know what grace, humor, joy are feelings and stylistic tools that are incomprehensible today). And it is therefore difficult for a reader and a critic to understand how, instead, the basis of this book is atrociously funereal, and contains all the obsessions of the modern world: the atomic bomb, the morality of consumption and the profound desire for self-destruction, no longer as flatus vocis or clichés, but as absolutely original and personally experienced elements, within a linguistic system so communicative that it scandalises.

n. 35, 27 August 1968

## THE FEAR OF BEING EATEN

To the average reader, that is, of average culture - or at least who has little knowledge of psychoanalysis - the following statement will seem very strange: we are still determined in our destiny by the fear of being "eaten". This other statement will seem even stranger: when the fear of being eaten is excessive or obsessive then it means that we "desire" to be eaten (we know, for example, that thanatophobia is actually anxiety about self-destruction; and not for nothing also in common parlance it is taken for granted that those who say too insistently that they hate actually love, and perhaps vice versa).

It has escaped none of us who have lived these years with curiosity that the use of the word "system" and its denial ("dissent", "dispute") has become obsessive: it is a typical situation in very advanced societies. And in fact the aforementioned words make much more sense in America or Germany than in Italy (where unfortunately there is still an Italian-style protest: given that the system is also Italian-style).

The obsessive, blind, indiscriminate, total, intimidating hatred towards those who do not share it (such as to create a sort of terrorist conformism of protest), can be expressed synthetically in a guiding notion, whose direct origins are in Marcuse, for whom the "system" always ends up assimilating everything, integrating every "possible" natural diversity or rational contestation, etc. This notion, fundamentally correct, has hardened, I repeat, into a sort of obsessive formula, which makes one both furious and impotent.

It's what I was saying before: the terror of being eaten, that is, the identification with a historical-biological archetype of an extremely new situation. But the terror of being eaten, pushed to this point, actually means, precisely, a "desire" to be eaten. When a young person, or a very up-to-date elderly person, blaming himself and others - to the point of despair and a strike - says that there is nothing to be done, that the system cannot fatally not "eat", he is actually saying: I want to be eaten, to disappear.

This desire for self-destruction - as a collective psychosis - is however not typical only of those who deny or contest the system: but rather is typical of the entire humanity who lives naturally in the system. And in fact, just as nature does not make leaps (this is a high school notion) between animal species, let's say, or between the animal world and the vegetal world, or between male and female, but passes from a contrary "fake" to another contrary "fake", through gradations, without a solution of continuity, so

between Mr. Rossi, a DC voter, and integrated into the system with the same naturalness with which a fish is integrated into the sea, and the architecture student Muratori, a desperate opponent, there is no solution of continuity , but there is only gradation: gradation of the desire for self-destruction.

I will not deal, unfairly, with Mr. Rossi, and I will rather deal with the student Muratori. Human organisation, the system - inevitable - is a structure which, in order to dominate life, takes it away from its absolute naturalness (which is then non-history, death) and makes it not only livable, but "knowable". It is always through the system, whatever it is - the Athenian direct democracy, the capitalist society, or the socialist one - that we "know" life (or reality).

Let's take any object of knowledge, the humblest, the most insignificant: for example, a leaf. I "know" this leaf: a) objectively, through human organization which modifies nature, for social reasons; b) subjectively, through my culture (let's say my readings of Virgil). That is: I know this leaf through the system. If the reality of a leaf therefore appears to me only through the system, imagine the reality of a human person, that is, Mr. Rossi for the student Muratori, and the student Muratori for Mr. Rossi! In short, the system provides me - and in this it has no competitors, except other systems - a complete set (one could not be added) of tools for understanding reality. Refusing the use of these tools means not wanting to "know" reality, that is, wanting to die.

This is why I think that desperation is today the only possible reaction to the injustice and vulgarity of the world, but only if individual and not codified. The codification of desperation in forms of purely negative protest is one of the great threats of the immediate future (like the atomic bomb or mass culture). It cannot help but give rise to extremisms, which, arriving at the diabolical coincidence of irrationalism and pragmatism, end up becoming new forms of fascism: perhaps left-wing fascism: blind to this simple reality: that as long as the system being fought persists ( specifically, the capitalist system) it should not be considered evil, because even underneath it there is reality, that is, God. In fact, reality is infinitely more extensive than the system, but the system is infinitely more extensive than us: and therefore , just as the system will never cover all of life, we will never be able to reach the boundaries of the system and bypass it. We will therefore always be able to know reality "through" the system, never

"beyond" the system. All we can do is modify the system, precisely, revolutionizing it, so that the relationship with reality, its knowledge, is, at least in our hopes, more pure and authentic.

n. 36, 3 September 1968

## WHAT HAPPENED IN VENICE

This is a brief chronicle of the first days of the Venice Film Festival, from which I will try to bring out what, in my opinion, is the real meaning of what happened.

The occupation of the Exhibition, decided by the Anac - which defined it as a «peaceful occupation of work» - and carried out by a Coordination Committee made up of the most varied opposition forces - from the left-wing parties, including part of the PSU, to a small representation of students - was presented to public opinion as a fight for culture, and therefore only implicitly political.

This created enormous confusion: a) among men of culture, who, on a culturalistic level, reproached us for opposing an exhibition that was actually on the side of culture; b) among the workers, who no longer felt like accepting the tautological and rhetorical equivalence - good throughout the 1950s -: fight for "progressive" culture equals political struggle; c) among students, who are not interested, rightly or wrongly, in strictly cultural problems, and who, not having lived in the 1950s, do not even think about making an a priori identification between a struggle for culture and a political struggle ; d) among observers and journalists, who saw the Anac's struggle simply as a miserable competitive struggle with the director of the Exhibition.

## THERE ARE ALSO FASCISTS

The only ones who immediately had clear ideas about the political meaning of the opposition to the Exhibition were the politicians: but not all the politicians, but the politicians in power.

But let's go in order.

Saturday 24 August, in the evening. There is a meeting of the forces fighting against the Exhibition (who, let it be clear, did not intend to prevent the Exhibition, but to make it their own), in which it was decided to go all the way: peaceful occupation, but also a peaceful demonstration of strength.

Sunday 25 August, in the evening. The authors of the Anac with all their allies (however, there are also around a hundred fascists around) appear in front of the Palazzo del Cinema.

A stormy meeting has been taking place here for many hours, pitting the president of the Biennale, the mayor of Venice, and the director of the Exhibition against each other. The latter ultimately resigned ambiguously; in fact, he does not accept the position of the mayor, who, albeit within very narrow limits, and for reasons dictated by simple common sense and prudence, is inclined to negotiate with his opponents. With the resignation of the director - given the automatic resignation of the entire administration - the Exhibition passes, at least temporarily and formally, into the hands of the Municipality of Venice.

A meeting between the Committee delegates and the mayor is therefore now possible. This meeting takes place, in fact, around nine o'clock and lasts until late at night.

The mayor accepts, in principle, the possibility that, from that moment, the administrative, technical and bureaucratic management will be entrusted to the Municipality of Venice while the cultural management will be entrusted to an Assembly formed by right of all the filmmakers. This Assembly would have, at the same time, developed the new regulations of the Exhibition: that is, in practice, it would have claimed and sanctioned the filmmakers' right to self-manage the Exhibition.

Having therefore accepted this solution in principle, the mayor issued an official statement in which it was established: a) that the mayor would consult the Municipal Administration the following day; b) that in the meantime the Opposition Committee would meet, without time limits, in the Sala Volpi to develop its proposals; c) that the mayor would consult the Committee by Monday, to possibly proceed together towards the provisional solution of co-management.

## THE GOVERNMENT MAN ARRIVES

Monday, August 26th. The Committee, according to the agreements, meets in the Sala Volpi and begins its work. Meanwhile, we know that an important politician has come from Rome, and it is with him, not with the Municipal Administration, that the mayor speaks. Furthermore, the mayor,

without the Committee knowing anything about it, issues a statement announcing that the Sala Volpi is open until 11pm.

Monday 26 August, afternoon. While the Committee continues its work, an Assembly made up of the journalists present at the Festival suddenly gathers in the Great Hall of the Palazzo del Cinema. An Anac delegation - although unwanted - passes from the Sala Volpi to the Sala Grande, blocking the journalists who are swarming outside, aided in this operation by some Catholic journalists. Thus, inside the Great Hall, we have a friendly meeting, in which the journalists finally realize that what is not in question is a violent and demagogic transfer of power from the cultural care of Chiarini to the cultural care of the Anac: but that they themselves are by right members of that Assembly of all filmmakers, which would provisionally direct this year's Exhibition, and, together, would develop the new structure of the Exhibition.

That is, they understand that it is a fight for a form of real and direct democracy, in which a State body wants to be torn from the authoritarian hands of the false democracy of Power, and entrusted to the hands of citizens interested in it. And all this through a, let's say, constituent Assembly, in which the Anac, among other things, would have been in the minority.

The Journalists' Assembly then decides, with 109 votes, against 10 or 12, to meet the same evening with the Committee Assembly, to discuss the possibility of a joint Assembly.

Monday 26 August, evening. It is at this point, and only at this point, that state authority intervenes. It could in fact negotiate (through a mayor who had an interest in maintaining calm in the city) regarding an occupation: but evidently it cannot, in the most absolute way, negotiate regarding self-management, even if only planned. And in fact he has no hesitations. Through the good mayor he immediately and brutally resorts to the use of force.

Thus, when the Opposition Committee leaves the Sala Volpi to meet in the Great Hall with the Assembly of journalists, first, under the eyes of the indifferent policemen, it is savagely attacked by the fascists: then it is prevented by the police, by order of the mayor, the entrance into the Great Hall.

He can therefore do nothing but repair again to the Sala Volpi.

The police then first cleared the Great Hall of journalists, then, after some time, entered the Volpi Hall and physically carried the Committee men out. The punishment is absolutely unprecedented: in fact the men of the Committee are forcefully thrown among the screaming fascists, who beat them, in a real lynching.

This is why I said from the beginning that only the politicians in power understood that the fight against the Exhibition is a political fight, the objective of which is a form of direct democracy that is absolutely new for Italy and perhaps for Europe. The self-management of the cultural microcosm of the Exhibition would have constituted a precedent that the power would never, in any way, have been able to accept.

Therefore, if the fear and violence of those in power are the measure for judging what truly revolutionary facts are, the consequence is simple: the fear and violence of power against the self-management project of a state body demonstrates that this project it is a revolutionary fact.

But the request for self-management is a democratic request. A democratic request is, therefore, revolutionary.

## NO ORDER COMES FROM ORDER

And let me again make this simple list of considerations:

1) The very serious events happening in America and Europe (Czechoslovakia) demonstrate how the prince's struggle is still a struggle for real democracy.

2) Real democracy has nothing to do with social democracy, which is fake socialism in a fake democracy.

3) Stalin, Brezhnev and Kosygin are possible in a country that has never known real democracy.

4) The only real democratic experience is lived by the working class and intellectuals who fight for socialism in an advanced capitalist democracy (except America, where real democracy is the explicit objective of the struggle of the New Left).

5) Marx was therefore right: only the working class of an advanced capitalist democracy can make the revolution. He was later contradicted by the facts: but his statement was, more than a real possibility, a desire: containing the "negative" prophecy of Stalinism and revisionism.

6) Czechoslovakia - especially Bohemia - has lived, albeit partially, a democratic experience: Russia has not. Soviet socialism is order: Czech socialism is progress. From democracy comes democracy. But order does not arise from order.

n. 38, 14 September 1968

## LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

We met - do you remember Mr Leone? - at a private screening of Birds and Birds (when the lights came back on, you gave me your first opinion on the film: suspended but cordial); I can therefore write to you not as to a remote head of government, but as to a man of flesh and blood, as to a friend.

I would like to ask you a specific question (a "question"?), followed by other questions arising from purely intellectual curiosity, not implying an answer.

The first question is: for what reason has the government presided over by you, which, precisely because it is provisional, represents state power in a more functional and transparent way, is a direct and unpretextual emanation of it, proven violently hostile to a request so «exquisitely » democratic, as was that of the protest forces against the Venice Exhibition (after an initial, let's say, subversive moment: the occupation, which after all was only threatened)?

## A CLAIM OF REAL DEMOCRACY

As you know, our request was based on two points: self-management and, therefore, decentralisation. In short, at the very moment in which we asked that a state body - subsidized by the State - be self-managed by the interested parties (in this case film authors and critics) it was evidently a request for "decentralization" of State power that we were asking for. But both self-management and the consequent effect of decentralization of power - as I wrote in "Chaos" a week ago - do not fall outside the framework of the democratic adjustment of our society. It wasn't a revolutionary request that we were making, and - let's be clear - it wasn't even a "reform". It was simply a pretense of real democracy. Now, you cannot be against any form of real democracy. The Italian Constitution aims to be the Constitution of a real democracy; not only does it include the need

(which only happens after twenty years) to reform the fascist Statute of the Biennale (but why not the fascist Penal Code?); but any request from citizens who claim to exercise their rights within the framework of an effective democracy must also be part of its spirit.

The State spends (if I'm not mistaken) around 150 million for the Venice Exhibition: a paltry sum, yet, in some way, sacred. To what end does the State allocate these 150 million? There is no doubt: the aim is cultural. Who really cares about culture, the authors or the producers? There is no doubt: to the authors. The only guarantee therefore for the Exhibition to be a cultural Exhibition is that power is decentralized and that the Exhibition is directly managed by the authors. (If the producers want to launch their films, let them pay for a Festival with their own money: let them not invoke a Director elected by the central power, their accomplice.)

Why, then, did your government not take the slightest consideration into our more than justified claim to self-management, and, indeed, intervened with violence? Why did his government so fiercely defend state centralism, undermined only by a paltry request for direct democracy, from four cats of authors?

This is certain: the request of these four cats was very unpopular: it is "outside" any mental habit of our fellow citizens (on the left, then, they call it reformist). Only after it has been carefully clarified does it begin to be timidly taken into consideration (as happened for example with the journalists present at the Lido).

But let's leave Venice alone (and then return there perhaps outside of this damned Exhibition). Are the Italian people capable of accepting the notions of self-management and decentralization? Have the Italian people ever experienced, I'm not saying a moment of real democracy, but the desire for real democracy? Well yes. In '44-45 and '68, albeit partially, the Italian people knew what it meant - perhaps only on a pragmatic level - what self-management and decentralization were, and experienced, with violence, a demand, albeit indefinite, of real democracy. The Resistance and the Student Movement are the only two democratic-revolutionary experiences of the Italian people. All around there is silence and desert: indifference, statist degeneration, the horrendous Savoy, Bourbon and Papal traditions.

Both in the Resistance and in the Student Movement, the request for real democracy was conveyed within a broader idea: the idea of socialism. And this was and will be inevitable. For example, the demand for real

democracy, which is the meaning of the struggle of the American New Left, cannot fail to lead to its own original form of non-Marxist socialism, despite having nothing in common with social democracy, which arises from concessions and reforms. , that is, from a slow evolution of the bourgeoisie (something that the Italian power plans, with great timidity, for the future).

n. 39, 21 September 1968

## THE POPE'S CRITICISM

In a newspaper in Rome, which today is an expression of pre-John Catholicism (to use a euphemism) a mysterious article appeared (on 15 September), which no other newspaper, as far as I know, at least up to the time of writing, has more recovered. The title of this article, in three columns, on the front page, was: Paul VI's criticisms of the State and the parties, the subtitle: «The Pope writes: the Constitution can and must be reformed». The article was accompanied by a comment: «Foreign state».

What is it about? Of a letter from Paul VI to Cardinal Giuseppe Siri, regarding the 39th Social Week of Catholics, which will be held in these days in Catania. The Roman newspaper specifies, however: «The document bears the signature of Cardinal Secretary of State Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, but the principles, indications and orientations outlined therein faithfully reflect the most recent developments in the political-social thought of Paul VI».

This clarification is therefore simultaneously an inference. Vulgarity, this, which does not depend on the fact that the columnist disrespected the Pope (for me, a layman, the Pope is not a "Holiness", but a man) but because, precisely, he disrespected a man : with the terrorist contempt towards him, which the servants of power have when they are given the order to attack.

Listen to an excerpt: «The Pope foresees and even justifies that the constitutional order of our country can be modified to follow the pace of the society in profound and accelerated transformation. This principle had already been enunciated in Bogotá and it was believed that the Pope intended to refer exclusively to the backward and depressed condition of the multitudes of Central and South America. Instead it seems that current Italy is also brought into play. Italy in which the underclass is about to disappear and industrial work rescues entire classes of workers from poverty. Only extremist parties use reasons in their propaganda polemics that clearly

contrast with the current Italian reality; but, as far as we know, the request for an immediate constitutional reform to legally subvert the order of democracy, whether formal or substantial, had not yet been formulated from that side. Because the Pope also said this: that in Italy democracy is only formal."

## NEED FOR A «REAL DEMOCRACY»

This extraordinary statement, "in Italy democracy is only formal", presupposed, as the elegant columnist of the Roman newspaper says, of a legal subversion of the order of democracy, is the key proposition of the entire Letter, written by Cardinal Cicognani and inspired by Paul VI (at least as it appears from the passages anticipated by the Roman newspaper).

I don't understand how this extraordinary statement has had, at least so far, so little echo in the press and public opinion: in fact it matters not only to the history of the Church, but to the history of Italy and, I would say, of the world.

"Legal subversion" instead of revolution is, for example, the guiding idea - reduced to the greatest simplification - of the American New Left: which brought America to the threshold and into an atmosphere of civil war. Perhaps through the mediation of the American model, part of the Student Movement also speaks of a "legal subversion" rather than a revolution: even if this "legal subversion" requires illegal and, practically, revolutionary actions (occupations, protests, struggles of all kinds ). The Americans talk about "antibodies" of real democracy to be born in the fabric of formal democracy; in Italy (see in «Quaderni Piacentini», n. 35: Politics redefined by C. Donolo) we talk about a society that modifies and replaces itself within itself, revolutionizing itself outside the patterns (therefore no longer fatal) of technological and neocapitalist revolution.

Throughout the world (see the recent case of Czechoslovakia) the need for a fight for "real democracy" is appearing as primary and urgent to consciences. The "order of democracy", as the clerical-fascist columnist of the Roman newspaper says, is a contradiction in terms; is a euphemism for “power.”

## ON THE THRESHOLD OF A SCHISM?

All the other sentences, quoted from the Letter of Cicognani and Paul VI, revolve around this stance against "power".

It's true, those sentences quoted, to be judged objectively, must be read in context: this keeps me from expressing my enthusiasm with more explicit words (and indeed, I don't want to rule out that mine could be a mistake). I hope to read that entire Letter somewhere else. Because, if the complete context of that Letter confirmed the spirit of the phrases reported, then it would be a Letter capable of bringing the Church to the threshold and into the atmosphere of a schism.

It is perhaps for this reason that, by some tacit agreement, the press has ignored (at least until now: and I believe that later, if it does not ignore it, it will certainly downplay it) such an incredible document.

I speak of "schism" just as two or three years ago, when no one was yet using this expression, I spoke of an actual state of "civil war" in the United States. Unfortunately, and fortunately, the facts then confirmed my impression: the state of civil war in America is increasingly looming and increasingly clear to consciences, in America and in the world.

I believe that we will have to prepare ourselves, in the near future, to also think about a possible state of schism for the Catholic Church, and have it present in our consciences.

A Pope cannot, without consequences, state that a democracy like the Italian one is "formal" and that we must fight, even legally (but is this always possible?), so that it is transformed into a real democracy. The tanks roll in the face of statements like this. The comment that the clerical-fascist newspaper made regarding this statement is in fact one of those comments that prepare the action of the illegality of legality: the violent restoration of order.

I cannot, lacking capacity and documents, go much further with this discussion, in terms of political commentary. I am therefore forced to change my tune.

What formulation, not strictly political or theological, should therefore be given to the schism, as a civil war in the Church?

I will have recourse to Saint Paul. In the First Letter to the Corinthians, we read this wonderful phrase (not everything in Paul is wonderful, the priest, the Pharisee, often speaks in him): «Faith, hope and charity remain, these three things: of all the best is charity» .

Charity - this mysterious and neglected "thing" - unlike faith and hope, which are so clear and so commonly used, is indispensable to faith and hope themselves. In fact, charity is also thinkable in itself: faith and hope are unthinkable without charity: and not only unthinkable, but monstrous. Those of Nazism (and therefore of an entire people) were faith and hope without charity. The same can be said for the clerical Church.

In short, power - any power - needs the alibi of faith and hope. He doesn't need the alibi of charity at all.

The habit of faith and hope without charity is a difficult habit to lose. How many Catholics, becoming communists, bring with them faith and hope, and neglect, without even asking the question, charity. This is how left-wing fascism was born.

The schism would therefore divide the Catholic Church into two sections: in the first only faith and hope would remain, that is, the two shapeless and blind forces of power; in the second, faith and hope with charity would remain. (The only way to realize, to return to our case, whether a democracy is formal or real.)

Paul VI is the Pope of this potential and postponed schism: which inevitably makes those who experience it ambiguous.

n. 40, 28 September 1968

## QUESTION AND RESPONSE WITH MORAVIA

. Elsa Morante won it with Io: We have just awarded a literary prize, here in Zafferana, in the province of Catania, The world saved by kids. Morante's victory is entirely due to the strength of her extraordinary book of verses. In fact, we judges awarded her the prize after being on the verge of putting it in crisis (i.e. "self-contesting" it): and she convinced us of this precisely because of the exceptional importance of the book.

The way we were going to undermine the prize is quite new. In fact we would have liked to award it to Aldo Braibanti: and with this we would have objectively denied it as a traditional literary prize. There had also been another proposal: that of not awarding the prize in protest against "poor" Sicily and, in this case, for the state of abandonment in which the earthquake victims were left.

You were among those who proposed abolishing the prize by assigning it to Braibanti, but you were not among those who proposed abolishing the prize in protest for the earthquake victims. Why?

Alberto Moravia: The award to Braibanti was a protest award against the trial that had been done not only to Braibanti but to culture. In other words: with the award to Braibanti we remained in the field of literature. By not giving the prize to protest in favor of the earthquake victims, one was leaving literature, or rather, a total renunciation of it was postulated. That is: there is, in my opinion, no clear distinction between the institution of literary prizes and literature. They are the same thing. Logically, giving up prizes also means having to give up writing books. And take action.

## WHEN LITERATURE IS ACTION

Me: Take action? But what does "action" consist of today?

Moravia: The action, theoretically, is the protest, the occupation of public places, the street demonstration, up to the point of guerrilla warfare and possible armed revolt. This is action, according to the intellectuals who deal with action. But I believe that literature is also sometimes action and sometimes it isn't. There are actions that are as inert as the most inert literature; and there are books that perform the same breaking function as revolutionary action. I don't need to say, for example, how Marx's Capital is action. Evidently we never realize enough that acting means changing reality: now, there are books that have changed reality more profoundly than any riot, revolt or protest. The problem is knowing how to write them.

Me: If "literature" and "action" are actually two actions, then let's say that the choice is not between literature and action, but, precisely, between two actions. Now, we know that there are times when you have to choose between two actions. Are we living in one of these moments?

Moravia: As I have said elsewhere, there are three stages through which a man of letters can pass. That is: there are social and political conditions in which good literature can be made, that is, creative literature, which is "ambiguous", like everything that is creative; and, obviously, the ambiguity inherent in art cannot be useful to politics. If the situation becomes radicalized, literature no longer seems necessary. The intellectual is then forced to use the traditional means that literature provides him to express his unambiguous political thought: the essay, the pamphlet, the pamphlet, the political oration...

## WHAT SENSE DO THE BARRICADES HAVE

Me: Maybe the rally...

Moravia: Finally, if the situation becomes extreme, the written word, both ambiguous and precise, is impossible... and then the intellectual either stays completely silent, or wages guerrilla warfare: as for example in Guatemala, where for the most part part of the guerrillas are students and intellectuals. These situations seem to depict three different species of men: but this is not true: it is always the same intellectual who carries out three different actions.

Me: Maybe you feel a little blackmailed (like me) by the apostles of intellectual suicide?

Moravia: Maybe. However, it is certain that we do not realize enough - especially in a country of amateurs like Italy - that most of the time the intellectual does not choose to act practically, but is forced to act practically. What does this mean? It means that you cannot contrast the book with the action, and make the man who writes cowardly and inert, and the man who acts courageous and active.

Me: In Italy which of the three situations you described do we live in today?

Moravia: Italy is not Guatemala. It's not even Sweden. She has both. Perhaps the variety of possible situations in Italy derives from this fundamental ambivalence. The very fact that there was much more talk of protest than of revolution distinguishes Italy from desperate countries where there is much more talk of revolution than of protest.

Me (to myself): So it seems to me that we are living in situation number 2; the duty to abandon creative ambiguity and move on to revolutionary clarity would consequently fall upon us. But couldn't the same goal be achieved by accentuating ambiguity in an abnormal and scandalous way?

Moravia: But at this point I would like to say that it is very rare for a book to be revolutionary (say: the Gospel, Capital), but very often, instead, books are contestatory. In fact, protest is halfway between criticism and revolution: it is more radical than the former in that it questions the validity of institutions, but it also retains a "demonstrative" character that true revolutions do not possess. The barricades of the French students in Paris were symbolic: both the students and the police knew that the barricades would not have resisted the tanks (while in the revolutionary uprisings of the past century they were real: that is, they were really instruments of urban guerrilla warfare). Now I don't think it's far-fetched to say that a

"demonstrative" (i.e. protest) action is equivalent, in effect, to an equally "demonstrative" book.

Me: But didn't you talk about a fundamental "ambiguity" of the book?

Moravia: Yes, in fact: the contestation is also ambiguous, and it is mainly so for a rather singular reason: for its distrust towards reason and for its trust in emotional and practical data. Fidel Castro's well-known statement: "action comes before conscience", makes one think very much of an aesthetic statement. Antonioni told me that films always present themselves to him first and foremost as stories, and that he understands the theme much later, once the film is finished. Now what is this if not "action before consciousness"? Here is therefore the point of contact between art and protest. According to orthodox and scientific Marxism, consciousness should come before action. In Castro's statement there is almost a final echo (as has already been said) of the decadent theories on violence and action at the end of the century.

## INTELLECTUALS WITHOUT CHOICE

Me: Is it from this irrationalism and this petty-bourgeois pragmatism that "left-wing fascism" is born?

Moravia: I would rather call it left-wing "Sorelism". However, it must be remembered that Castroism arises from a social situation that does not allow for the long preparation of orthodox Marxism, with a view to the formation of a political conscience.

Me (to myself): But where on earth did this happen?

Moravia: I have already said that sometimes one does not choose to act but is forced to act: this is the case of Latin American intellectuals. However, there is no doubt that the complete overthrow of Marxist practice could lead to profound modifications of Marxism itself tomorrow.

Me: But tell me: what is the most original nature of protest?

Moravia: It is the character that anti-literary literature has always had: «current events». But let's clarify this worn-out word: I consider all Shakespeare's plays that deal with kingship to be current, because in those times the king and the problem of reigning were what was most current. Today, in this profound and organic sense, the situations that concern the "system" and "dissent from the system" are equally relevant.

Me (to myself): Is it therefore ambiguity that gives absoluteness to current events?

n. 42, 12 October 1968

## A MONSTROUS CREATION

For centuries the Church has continued to judge and discriminate against humanity through this crazy notion of belief and non-belief. Faith and Hope, without Charity, have given this beautiful result. Charity, which is much more mysterious and indefinable than Faith and Hope, on the contrary, is not useful for practical life (it is only idealistic, in the purest sense of the term; but it is not irrationalistic): it is therefore not useful for carrying forward a 'organization. Faith and Hope are enough for this. Yet Charity is realistic, and therefore human. Only through Charity can we avoid the atrocious inhumanity of discrimination and repression: of the artificial and monstrous creation of the "other" (with the consequent ghettos and the consequent holy wars). And only through Charity can the inhuman notion of the non-believer be eradicated, as Charity can also recognize Charity in him (even if it detects the lack of Faith and Hope in him; or even if it detects another Faith and another Hope). (I apologize for all the capitalization.)

## SEMINARS HALF EMPTY

Cardinal Koenig possesses, yes, Faith and Hope; but he also has Charity. He is therefore a man of schism; he is therefore, undoubtedly, a man of the future of the Church. The Seminaries are half empty. Faith and Hope can be taught or imposed (discrimination and oppression have boundless power); but Charity is a free conquest. It is a real relationship with reality.

Advanced neo-capitalist Europe, like America, is moving towards a religion in which, according to the teaching of Saint Paul, Charity prevails over Faith and Hope: where, therefore, there is not much need for priests, and that's it the Gospel. Are we therefore faced with a new wave of Protestantism? And the Dutch clergy, Cardinal Koenig, Don Milani, do they represent this new wave? It would not be surprising: the historical conditions have a singular analogy with those in which the Protestant revolt took place.

There are, today, as then, two Europes: one advanced and one backward. In the first, a new bourgeoisie is formed today, just as the bourgeoisie was born then; in the second the old (clerico-fascist) bourgeoisie survives, just as feudal society survived then.

Will the political-social split in Europe lead to a religious split? And will the Curia remain with Portugal, with Franco's Spain, with the Greece of the colonels, with Scelba's Italy, that is, will it continue to be irrational, temporal and repressive (Faith and Hope)? Will there be a new Counter-Reformation?

## THE FALSE BATTLES

Out of angry modesty I have always refrained from mentioning Vietnam in vain: as in the Commandments it is said (in vain) to do with God. But now there is a moment of pause (ah, certainly not definitive) in the ), I want to say all my love for those small and sublime people. While in Europe false vanguard battles are being fought (false in that they are objectively premature: everywhere in Europe there is fascism, in its various forms, except in England): over there, in Vietnam, a rearguard war is being fought: that is, he fights first of all for those minimal and elementary things which are freedom and independence. I don't want to teach anyone a lesson with this. I don't want to be a blackmailer myself. I just want to invite you to be realistic. And I say this above all to men of my age: who have had the fate, like me, of having to "fulfil" themselves in an era different from the one in which their life began. the atrocious fashion of Vietnam; now that the Vietcong, albeit briefly, seem distant and "separated" (it is more functional to talk about Mexican students, now

## TRAGIC AMBIGUITY

No: for them it's still the old era, they have to fight their old battles. Precisely because they are still in the world, many of the reasons that conditioned their era are still real. Their ambiguity has therefore worsened further: to the point, of course, of becoming dramatic, or even tragic. In fact, they cannot fail to know and not see that a new era has been born: but they cannot help but "fulfil" themselves in the old. It's not a question of generations.

Even if university students shout O Ci-min, the Vietcong, farmers and "heroes", belong to the old era. I put the word "heroes" in quotation marks because, as Basaglia told me, in her mental hospital, a patient said that heroes are a product of repressive societies.

n. 43, 19 October 1968

## AN EXTRAORDINARY FILM

I would like to talk about two films (without wanting to steal Patti's work...): Partner by Bernardo Bertolucci, and I visionari by Maurizio Ponzi.

First, however - for the reader's use - I will have to compile a short terminological dictionary of five words. Profilmic: everything that is in front of the camera is called "profilmic", environments, characters, costumes, things, everything. Sequence shot: it is a single shot, in which an entire action takes place. At most, if the entire act of a comedy were filmed from the audience by a camera, it would constitute the "model sequence shot". Field: let's say I find myself with the camera in an open space between the mountains and the sea. Motu proprio, I decide that everything on the sea side is "field". All the shots I shoot with the sea in the background constitute the "field". Reverse shot: the "reverse shot" is made up of everything that is on the opposite side of the "shot": that is, in the case presented, the background of the mountains. Since the spectator's eyes coincide with the lens, in our example, the spectator has the illusion of being in the place of the camera, and therefore knows that if he looks at the sea he has the mountains behind him, and if he looks at the mountains he has the sea behind.

Therefore in the film there is not only a psychological transference of the spectator into the character (with whom he identifies): there is also a physiological transference: since the spectator identifies his own physical presence with that lucky spectator who is the director-camera. In short, in addition to being sentimentally inside the feelings for which the characters in the film act, the spectator, thanks to the "shot" and the "reverse shot", finds himself in the middle of the action of the film itself, "between the sea and the mountains" .

Bernardo Bertolucci's film is extraordinary because the action all takes place "on camera" (but when I say "everything" I obviously exaggerate: perhaps there is some reverse shot).

What is the result of having shot the entire Partner on the pitch? It's simple: the spectator loses the illusion of being "inside" the film: that is, of having the mountains behind him if he has the sea in front of him and vice versa: that is, he has nothing behind him. So that he physically remains a spectator; like in the theater. He has the fantastic world of the film in front of him, but he has other spectators behind him. He is not a participant but an observer, he is not involved but a witness.

## THE SPECTATOR BECOMES JUDGE

The awareness of being sitting in the armchair "in front" of a show taking place in front of him puts him in a state of mind that disturbs and provokes him. No longer participating emotionally in the actions, he "is forced to judge it". He is therefore called directly into question, throughout the course of the film, as the person "at whom the film is directed".

To my knowledge, a similar technique or style has never been used. Partner is therefore not only a technically and stylistically new film, but it is actually a new way of making cinema. A cinema that does not involve the spectator sentimentally, but forces him to be a judge: a cinema deprived of the force of attraction for him, but full of a mysterious and provocative force of expulsion.

And, I add, the film (or rather this type of cinema) is not at all "theatrical", even if sequence shots abound: it therefore also establishes a new type of relationship between cinema and theatre. In other words: cinema would no longer resemble theater only when it is made up of long sequence shots: but it would resemble (and in a more profound way) theater even when it all takes place "in shot, without reverse shot".

However, there is a profound contradiction in Bertolucci's film. With this film Bertolucci invented (perhaps unconsciously?) a new way of making cinema, a new type of cinema. This would therefore entail his critical rejection of all previous cinema. Instead, this critical refusal does not exist: on the contrary. And here is the contradiction. Making a completely new "cinema", Bertolucci is however full of nostalgia for the old cinema.

The entire "profilmic" world, one might say, is replaced by quotations. I will keep quiet about the deliberate and amusing quotes (for example, the American musical, in the meeting between the double and the girl going down a staircase) and I will also keep quiet about the quotes that want to

provocatively testify to elective affinities (and it is useless to mention the name of the leader Godard : the posters on Vietnam, Godard-like, are however, let's say, the least beautiful part of the film, artistically and politically: there is some indifference overturned by terrorism).

## IMMERSED IN THE OLD CINEMA

Instead I will underline a "quotation" that will certainly amaze the author himself: the quote from Fellini. Much of the pro-filmic world of Partner is Fellini-esque (from the cynical choice of faces, to the gags that are all over the top: love on the double-decker bus, the collection of butterflies, the guillotine; and a continuous "gigantism" of small things: the girl, with blue eyes painted on her eyelids, who goes around selling products packaged in "enlarged" containers is entirely Fellini-esque: but behind Fellini there is also the whole of neorealism, that is, the most "cinematic" cinema of the history of cinema (later recovered by Godard).

Bertolucci has therefore even invented a new cinema in his way of shooting; but in the world he traveled around, he is instead completely immersed in the old cinema, even engulfed in an uninterrupted series of quotations and imitations.

What does this mean? That there is a radical contradiction in the author, which I have identified on a technical and stylistic level: but which the spectator - and he will be a spectator par excellence - will find on many other levels, in the very content of this work, violent and unrealistic , missed and inspired.

Ponzi's film (The visionaries: which won the first prize at the Locarno Film Festival, and it is strange that at least one small case did not arise in Italy: always like this, when "cases" deserve to be born) is all a else. It, unlike Bertolucci's film, is strictly unitary: so unitary, as to be almost monotonous, monolithic, devoid of glimmers: and, consequently, mysterious, or, rather, enigmatic.

Without changes of pace, without ever leaving itself, without ever reflecting itself, all lost within its profilmic world as in a shrine, The Visionaries makes the spectator experience himself; who leaves the viewing of the film, therefore, as if after having "participated" in a mystery.

A very quiet mystery: petty-bourgeois and intellectualistic. The strange thing is that, as in Bertolucci's film, also in Ponzi's film, the ideological

protagonist is the theatre. But strangely, even when Ponzi represents theater in cinema, he represents it cinematically: the theater in Ponzi becomes cinema as the "shot" and the "reverse shot" are used regularly.

The spectator, who is a spectator of theater in cinema, enters "inside" that theater represented in cinema: he does not have other spectators behind him, but he has the world represented by Ponzi behind him. He therefore lives cinematically from the mysterious feelings of the protagonists, and, moreover, he is physically "inside" their world.

The theater in Bertolucci is intellectualistically idealized as a model show. In Ponzi it is represented existentially as a symbol of existence. In fact, actors experience the same story in the theater that they experience in life... But I don't want to delve into the territory that is the responsibility of the film critic. I will still stick to the assumption of examining the film as a more or less competent "colleague".

Ponzi's film has a characteristic in common with Bertolucci's (although it is very different!): cinematographic culture.

I made, albeit summarily, the list of cinema that is in Bertolucci's cinema: so much so that it turned out that Partner (an effectively revolutionary film in the history of cinema) rather than being an original product, is in a certain sense an almost exclusively cultural product . Ponzi's film is also full of cinematic culture. In short, cinema is passing into a second phase: it is becoming a cinema, that is, in which the history of cinema counts; as for literature, the history of literature matters.

In Ponzi there is, for example, a re-enactment of the cinema of the Thirties, done in a way and with an intensity that up to now have no models (the Thirties have so far been evoked commercially from the outside: not according to the taste of a such refined and mature cinematographic culture, as in Ponzi. And note: his film is not at all an elegant film in the conventional sense of the word, in fact it almost has some roughness, it is very unadorned and massive).

## IN MY OPINION IT IS RACISM

I don't even want to invade the field of the theater critic: however, allow me a small "doléance" on the reception that theater critics have given to the Candelaio staged by Luca Ronconi.

I don't like this show very much; first of all because I love Giordano Bruno too much, I consider him so familiar and sublime, that any staging of the Candelaio would not satisfy me: above all, if, like this one, it lacks a truly cultural effort, and focuses entirely on theater in the specialist sense of word.

Furthermore, that certain avant-gardism that exists seems a bit old to me (prior to the latest avant-gardes, and prehistoric, for example compared to living and Carmelo Bene: then, better a strictly academic theatre, if it were possible).

Ronconi's good idea was to take a group of "crooks" from the street (among them, however, there is an actor taken from the street who has already gained experience, Ninetto Davoli): it is true that, then, Ronconi he compressed and repressed these scoundrels to reduce them to the standard of the official theatre. However, their truth and their vitality are irrepressible, and press violently against the well-tensioned and "tonal" fabric of the show.

Well, all the critics in unison, like frogs, deprecated this idea of Ronconi's. And everyone veiled their heads and eyes, so as not to accept the sub-proletarian intrusion, so as not to witness the irruption of the innocent and scandalous presences of the suburbs into the splendor of the centre. Well, in my opinion, it's racism...

n. 44, 26 October 1968

## THE WILL NOT TO BE A FATHER

When I observe, with love or aversion, with complicity or anger, etc. etc. the students of the Student Movement, a feeling is continuous and certain: the will not to want to consider me their father.

The reasons for this are many. There is, certainly, in me, a general desire not to be a father (that is, not to assimilate to my father and fathers in general) etc. And perhaps there is also a father's rivalry (a father in spite of himself) against his children: who therefore tries to deny his own quality as a father in order to deny their rights as children. And then he knows what else. But there are also objective reasons: I will explain two of them: 1) the human and cultural precociousness of the young people of the latest generation (who will certainly read these naive lines of mine with "adult" irony): therefore they do not at all have the air of children (or, in any case, there is also in them the deaf, mysterious desire not to be children); 2) the

fact that the new generation was born and trained in another era, with such different interests and forms of life: and of which, only through the pure and simple fact of living, they have an experience that we we cannot do anything except from the outside, and as a "prediction". Now what distinguishes (stupidly anyway) a father from a son? The presumed different degree of experience of a single world. I, on the contrary, as a father, live in a world (let's say: the old humanistic world, albeit in crisis, and aware of the crisis): while they, the children, live in another world (let's call it post-humanistic, rather than technical or technological, or technocratic, because it is preferable, to be precise, to stick to general ones).

However, when I see female students - proud, proud, factious, touching companions - usually so small, pale, weak - or funnily little girls - so undressed, they seem a bit like victims and a bit of sluts - with their petty bourgeoisie printed like a mark on that pretty flesh and those eyes that stare full of uncertainty, and, at the same time, of so much idealism and so much conscience, I am overcome by a profound emotion. I truly feel like a father to one of these tender and defiant students. With everything paternal that follows: the lack of rivalry, the confidence, the affection, the need (...albeit paternalistic) to give them advice, useful because it is useless, or to tell them (always paternalistically... .): «Go your way: and leave this old man behind, to deal with his peers and fight his old battles».

## TWO WORDS ABOUT NENNI

I don't know, I don't care much, what the new government will be like. My politics are clearly platonic. In addition to being impractical, it is also non-moralistic. It is therefore destined to be extremely unpopular: also because my independence is not loved by me, on the contrary, it is considered a form of impotence.

However, I would like to say a few words about Nenni. I remember that a few years ago, I wrote a poem addressing him and pushing him on the path that he then took. I don't remember exactly what the topics of those verses of mine were - which, among other things, I have lost, and I don't even remember where they were published - I only remember one idea (I think it was the conclusion), and that is: never being victorious, never being on the winning side ends up drying up. It's an idea like any other, a little false, a little true. I then wrote another poem (titled Vittoria: it concludes my last

book of verses, whose publication dates back to '64) where, instead, I criticized Nenni's "return" to the part of order and power: of the victorious . In recent years I have therefore not been publicly in favor of him: in my stormy relations with the PCI, the latter always ended up prevailing. But my sympathy for Nenni was irrepressible. He seems to me to be the nicest man in the Italian political world. But it is not pure and simple sympathy that inspires me in the observation that I would now like to make on the Centre-left (without prejudice to my basic criticism, as a dissident communist, to the left of the PCI, only, not out of fashion, and often in very bad company): the observation is this: the years of the Centre-left were decisive years for Italian history and in a profoundly positive sense. I have often repeated, already, in these columns: democracy is born from democracy. The Center-Left made a grain of democracy roll down the slope of a country that had never known democracy: as it rolled, the grain became a small avalanche, as inevitably happens. Students often whistle playfully at Nenni: they don't understand how much the strength of their Movement in Italy is due, albeit indirectly, to him. The leading groups of the Student Movement would have remained infinitely more isolated than they are, if a large number of students - the shapeless mass of shock - had not been formed in years of centre-left, in which a breath of democracy is albeit barely passed over Italy: it is also from this almost imperceptible breath that the wave of the Student Movement was born - not as an elite movement, but as a mass movement - as the students, in their mass, found themselves almost suddenly faced with the "awareness of one's democratic rights".

This awareness, then, even if hitherto unconsciously, marked a definitive discriminant between two concepts which, in inexperience, had merged: the concept of democracy and the concept of social democracy.

Extraordinary: the PSU is threatened, irreparably, by social democracy, and is objectively guilty of "reformism" and therefore of complicity with the bosses: at the same time, it has unleashed a democratic conscience for which a "reform" is no longer a "reform » but a democratic right. This implies a revision of the idea of democracy, which then fits into a delicate moment in the history of communism. See Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, where the problem of "liberalizing" the Party is the main problem. But what does "liberalize" mean in this case: returning to liberal democracy, or to conservative democracy or to American-style pluralistic democracy? What does liberalism mean when referring to communism? These are the most

urgent questions of the Marxist world (Yugoslavia answers them with "self-management" and "decentralization"; which are purely "democratic" ideals and, together, follow the Marxist directive for the destruction of the State). The Centre-left, on an objective and, I would say, existential level, has contributed to making young people especially mature in facing these problems, beyond the provincial pettiness and cultural misery in which Nenni and his party found themselves fatally involved .

not. 46, November 9, 1968

## OPEN LETTER TO SILVANA MANGANO

Dear Silvana, I've owed you a letter for a long time. A letter, if not a "bouquet of magnificent roses". Instead of writing it to you privately, I'm writing it to you publicly. This places limits on confidence and affection; but it gives it, perhaps, a greater value.

It is a letter full of bitterness. A confused and inexpressible bitterness - a light and immense disgust: which however I don't want to communicate to you. It is perhaps about the trial of , which people believe is for me a matter of common administration, planned and played as in a sort of bet with life: but instead it is a dramatic event. If this were not the case it would be too easy for me (my struggle). If there wasn't in me - unavoidable, coagulated in my childhood days - a conformism that produces drama, my non-conformism would be too easy. Don't you think? Theorem

In the bitterness I feel (and which affects me completely, from top to bottom) in writing you this letter, an important role is played by the feeling that your work with me has not given you the satisfaction I was hoping for. (You, infinitely more "bitter" and wiser than me, did not have such hopes, I know.) But nevertheless, the push to write you this letter was given to me by a two-day trip to Paris (again for Teorema) : where, at the "Dragon", they were giving the first screening for France of Oedipus Rex: it is a great success - as they say triumphantly, heaving a sigh - of "the public and critics". I would like to bring you the passages in which Parisian critics talk about you. The satisfaction (which you don't want to have) would be truly great.

But let's go back to our bitterness (of which Parisian satisfaction is merely a contradictory confirmation). Bitterness, as a diffuse and unrealized state of neurosis. Neurosis, as a conflict of conformism and non-conformism. Of fear and courage. Of grace and impotence. In such different

ways, so profoundly different, we are both victims of it. Perhaps our magically supportive collaboration is based on this bitterness - which allows us to work with great spirit and with little hope - I would say... stoically. We are equally punctual and dutiful as good children at school, aren't we?, and we have a well-rooted sense of our duty: we would never break our word... It was not difficult for me to "contemplate" all these aspects of your nature - punctuality , sense of duty, loyalty - while we worked together, in Morocco, in Rome, in Milan. And it is all this, strange to say, that produces the mystery of your beauty. Your bitter beauty: which offers itself, looming, like a theophany, a pearly splendor; while, in reality, you are far away. You appear where you believe, where you work, where you get busy: but you are where you don't believe, where you don't work, where you don't get busy. Called here by an obligation that (who knows why) you have while living, the reality of your distance remains, like a sheet of glass between you and the world. Without us ever telling each other (given the wild modesty) my soul was often with you, behind that glass.

When Dionysus arrived in Thebes, in the guise of a handsome mortal boy, with long hair (so much so that, even then, Pentheus would have liked to cut it off), he looked full of grace, of joy, of youthful laziness (when young people have so much time ahead of them that they are not afraid to throw it away). Little by little, his truly happy presence, a form of liberation (Tiresias will say: «It certainly won't be Dionysus who wants / chaste women: but virtue is born / only from nature. And you think about this: / if a woman is chaste, even in 'Bacchic orgy / does not corrupt...'), reveals itself as a frightening presence, a form of destruction. «Dionysus is god / among the gods the most benign and the most terrible»: he himself says of himself.

He came in human form to Thebes to bring love (but not sentimental love blessed by convention!), and instead he brings disruption and carnage. He is the irrationality that changes, insensibly and with the most supreme indifference, from sweetness to horror. Through it there is no solution of continuity between God and the Devil, between good and evil (Dionysus transforms, in fact, insensibly and with the most supreme indifference, from the young man full of grace that he was at his first appearance into an amoral young man and criminal). Both as a "benign" apparition and as a "cursed" apparition, society, founded on reason and common sense - which are the opposite of Dionysus, that is, of irrationality - does not understand

him. But it is her own misunderstanding of this irrationality that irrationally leads her to ruin (to the most horrendous carnage ever described in a work of art). They are the I. M., to quote Elsa Morante, the Unhappy Many, that is, the majority, or the average, founded on rationality and common sense, who do not understand the grace of Dionysus, his freedom, and therefore end up atrociously in the massacre: of of which, moreover, irrationality itself is the patron. How many Péntei, in our society, dear Silvana: who first want to cut the long hair of the young God who appears to them and who they do not want to recognize, and then end up going to spy on the Maenads, dressed as women, and with being torn apart by them in horrendous carnage (Auschwitz, Dachau, Vietnam, Biafra). The Italian Pèntei are mediocre, petty imbeciles, not even worthy of being torn apart by the Maenads. (Moreover, as far as they are concerned, it is enough to reread the song by Elsa Morante that I have already quoted: enough, insomnia, for their unhappiness to belong to the category of the "Unhappy Many"!)

To return to the two of us, we recognized Dionysus: but with fear, a fear born in the world of the Unhappy Many. And this gives us that bitterness, which corrects and makes the happiness we have understood ambiguous: renunciation or commitment, they are drugs with which we try to fill the void left by that half of happiness that we are unable to enjoy. Hence your neurotic indifference towards things, hence my anguish over events such as my trial etc. But in short, with the help of Dionysus, we hope to work together again. And to have, together, those satisfactions of which we have no hope, and which pass quickly, pure and simple "oppositions", revealing, to our bitterness.

## BASSANI: STORY OF A DELIRIUM

The new Italian literary season began with a book that I read, unfortunately with profound "correspondence of loving senses": The Heron by Giorgio Bassani. It is the story of a delirium - which the protagonist suddenly becomes aware of, and not in an "upbeat" moment, but in an "upbeat" moment - according to the author's diabolical narrative ability: in the moment, that is, stylistically emptier, narratively grayer. The "unconscious disgust" for his own life as a petty bourgeois from Ferrara, vulgar but not completely insensitive, if not for the Jewish wound which, making him vulnerable, brutally tore him from the fatal vulgarity of his

social class - becomes "conscious disgust" » suddenly and without any reason: perhaps due to saturation. An entropy that explodes. Edgardo, the protagonist, is for me a man, if not hateful, then repellent. I couldn't have written a single line about this Edgardo. Bassani wrote an entire book about him and therefore lived with him for years. How could he?

For Bassani, men like Edgardo are heroes: "bourgeois heroes", despite the obvious contradiction in terms, the "contradiction that does not allow it". And why are they heroes? Because he couldn't be like them: a bourgeois like that. And he could not be so for external reasons: because he is Jewish and, during his youth - apart from racial persecution and Jewish "diversity" objectively functioning in any historical moment - during his youth there was fascism. Bassani was therefore blocked in his criticism of the bourgeoisie, because something or someone prevented him, unjustly, from becoming bourgeois - if he had wanted it. He was deprived of the freedom to be bourgeois. This made him see the bourgeoisie in a different light: the light of nostalgia. Since for him it was a "lost condition", due to causes of force majeure and not through free choice, he began to regret it (in contradiction to his nature as a poet, who cannot be bourgeois nor can he see a bourgeois as a hero: he can see him at most as a "creature" who arouses pity or makes you smile: as in the films of Renoir or Tati).

Not feeling repugnance, but nostalgia, for their life, Bassani can not only describe the world of the bourgeois, but even describe it by "reliving" their speeches: that is, continually quoting their stock phrases, their clichés: all arising from a atrocious ideology: conservatism, right-thinking, paleocapitalist consumerism. Practically, by weaving his own prose with their speech, Bassani manages to create an analogy between the small bourgeois world and his style. Which become two parallel entities. Edgardo decides to die because of his own life; Bassani, who relived Edgardo's life through his own style, seems to want to die with him. That's why reading this book is so terrible.

## OLD AGE OF A MODERN MAN

Speaking of the inaugural book of the new literary season, I don't want to miss the opportunity to take a look back at the past one. The book of verses by Carlo Betocchi, published by Mondadori, immediately comes to mind. It seems to me that a sort of injustice has been exercised on this book: even if

it received very good reviews, warm oral approval from mutual friends; and even won an award. All this is not enough. Betocchi's book is the first book that truly gives an idea of what the old age of a modern man is like (Betocchi is seventy, even if he doesn't look it): in such a true and fatal way, with such a grace full of the possessed decision to harm himself and his reader - through the excess of a lucidity incapable of answering any question - who still, after many months of reading it, am under the anguished and revealing impression of it. Here's what awaits me.

not. 47, November 16, 1968

## «DIALOGUES» ON CINEMA AND THEATER

I'm on Etna. It rains, it snows, the fog passes, the sun shines. It's raining again, it's snowing again, the fog is passing through again, the sun is shining again. I have, with three of the protagonists of the film that I have to start shooting, the following dialogues.

I. What is cinema, Niné?

Ninetto Davoli. Cinema is cinema.

I. Godard says it too, you know?

Ninetto. Godard is an intelligent man.

I. Just smart?

Ninetto. And then he's someone I like.

I. Why?

Ninetto. Because he is someone who could be a friend of mine... someone who could be from my neighborhood... A simple man...

I. What do you mean by simple man?

Ninetto. A laborer who always goes to work...

I. Godard a labourer?

Ninetto. Yes, because I like it.

I. And do you like his films?

Ninetto. Yes, I like seeing them... watching them... those films... But if I have to say that I understand them completely, no. I like watching them because when I see his films I see him.

I. So cinema is cinema. And the theatre? Things?

Ninetto. Theater is theater. For me everything is simple.

I. What difference is there between a man in reality and the same man represented at the cinema or on the stage?

Ninetto. Nothing, no difference.

I. So are reality, cinema and theater the same thing?

Ninetto. In a certain sense... yes... they are the same thing... except that there you see the man in person, and at the cinema you see him on the screen, and at the theater on the stage.

I. You are a reality guy, you are a film actor, and now also a theater actor. In which of these forms do you feel most true?

Ninetto. On the theater.

I. (I've always told you). And why?

Ninetto. Because in the theater it's not like in the cinema, where an action is repeated many times. In the theater, once you enter the stage, everything happens one after the other.

I. So do you feel more like a "Ninetto" on stage than in the little bar in Piazzale Prenestino or in Via dell'Acqua Bullicante?

Ninetto. Really... the same: because they are always stages.

I. So is the whole world a stage?

Ninetto. And why? Not bad! Isn't the world a stage? And what else is it?

I. So would you like me to do some long sequence shots with you in the film we are about to shoot?

Ninetto. Oh, that would be better...

I. And instead I divide the action into many short sequences, close-ups, full figures, long shots. That is, I collect every expression and every gesture, one might say, in a single shot. Why do you think I do this?

Ninetto. You don't do it to fill the film... You do it to make things more real.

I. So aren't the truest actions, as you said before, the continuous ones, i.e. those of reality or theatre?

Ninetto. Now you're making things too complicated for Pa...

I. Do you like the title of the film we are shooting: Pigsty?

Ninetto. I like it yes, I like it. Because I know the story and I like it.

I. The fascists etc. laugh out loud, they don't miss the opportunity to write jokes about this title, without the slightest restraint...

Ninetto. Why do we have to laugh at Pa? In the end they will be screwed.

I. And why?

Ninetto. Because in the end they won't be able to laugh anymore.

## TIME DESTROYS PURITY

I. You are terribly the same both in reality and in cinema. And at the same time, you are terribly different. How do you explain it?

Pierre Clementi. Because the more I enter into myself, the more I encounter things I don't know. Therefore when I am in front of the camera, I am "myself in search". There is a lot of difference, moreover, between reality and cinema: because cinema is one of the many means of representing reality. With a film you can reconstruct a world: in reality it is more difficult. However, cinema is one of the tools that can bring men back to reality.

I. Why do you think men don't live in reality?

Pierre. Yes, yes, but I think that television and all other institutions (let's say: mass media) distance man from reality...

I. Franco Citti says that reality is purity.

Pierre. Yes, that's true, but time destroys purity. Cinema performs many functions: for a film to perform the function of purity... To make pure cinema you need to take pure people. Which commercial cinema certainly doesn't do...

I. And what does commercial cinema represent then?

Pierre. It's a sleeping pill. It is made for a busy society to digest. It is made by vulgar men who think others are vulgar.

I. What would be your ideal way to make cinema?

Pierre. Take a journey that has life and death at its core. For example, starting with a team of men who have the same needs, the same aspirations, etc., and arriving at making a creation so strong that it surpasses reality...

I. Towards where?

Pierre. Well. Man makes his journey alone: and this is reality. God, country, family etc., that is, habits, are to blame for this loneliness. Two solutions then remain: either take a rifle and shoot, or take a movie camera and make cinema: this is how we go beyond solitude.

## ARTISTS, EXPERIENCE AND IMAGINATION

I. What is cinema?

Franco Citti. Cinema is cinema.

I. And what is reality?

Frank. The one that exists only in the pure.

I. And what is everything else?

Frank. It's injustice.

I. Does cinema always represent reality?

Frank. I think it represents, in general, injustice. Because pure directors are few.

I. What reality do you live in? In the reality that is in the hearts of the pure or in the reality that is injustice (and that Elsa Morante and I call "unreality")?

Frank. I live in the reality that is in the hearts of the pure, but I am also forced to live in injustice.

I. And what is the difference between you in reality and you in cinema?

Frank. But... I imagine that cinema is a profit, and my reality is always purity...

I. But what kind of pure man are you if you make cinema to earn money?

Frank. And why do the others do it?

I. But others do not claim to be pure.

Frank. And in fact I have never earned...

I. But so you contradict yourself...

Frank. But I want to contradict myself.

I. Let us then formulate the question in a more concrete way: are you more "true" as Franco Citti or as Accattone or Oedipus?

Frank. As Franco Citti.

I. Maybe because Franco Citti is more contradictory than Accattone?

Frank. I contradict myself precisely because I made films.

I. When you made Accattone, therefore, you were entirely in the "reality that is in the hearts of the pure", by making cinema you also entered the reality that is "injustice": is that so?

Frank. I say that in making Accattone I didn't make just one film, but I made two: I did it with my heart and Pasolini with my imagination. With my heart, me, that is, without knowing what I have done: due to inexperience with cinema. While fantasy is the experience that artists have.

I. So I used you for your reality (unaware of itself, and, as you said, belonging to the world of the pure): but Accattone's actions (exploiting women, stealing, etc.) are pure actions, in the sense that you say ?

Frank. Purity is an open... free thing... Exploiting women or stealing can also be part of it...

I. Why do you think the fascists and the bourgeois were so fierce against a "real" (pure) character like Accattone?

Frank. I can only tell you one thing: I don't know what the word "fascist" means, even after having suffered so much at the hands of the fascists.

I. Do you foresee that we will also have to suffer because of Porcile?

Frank. Yes, because fascists live in that reality which is injustice.

not. 48, November 23, 1968

## DIARY FOR A DEATH SENTENCER

Turin, 20 November 1968 - Panagulis is about to be shot; and I can't tolerate this idea.

Locked inside a hotel room; prisoner of my obligations, of my future, etc., I find myself filled with a curious feeling of intolerance towards my impotence. It's true, in all these decades in which I happened to find myself in the world, and to "decide", among shouts like these which, violent and faint, rise into the sky of Turin, in front of the many news of death sentences like this , I suffered, I felt my insides twisting with anger and anguish: but it has never happened to me, however, to suffer like today.

What is "special" about this death sentence? I can't say. I only have one banality in mind: it's the straw that breaks the camel's back. However, I don't understand why the vase now suddenly turns out to be full, to the brim, to the point of overflowing. I have always thought that this vessel of our resignation had infinite capacity. Instead I find myself with a full jar; and I am absolutely devoid of that experience which is needed by those who have reached the limits of endurance. There is nothing simpler than the case of Panagulis. On this same page, the other week, I wrote a poem about him: probably, indeed certainly, a bad poem, like all the things you write with tears in your eyes: in that poem I cited the many heroes of Euripides, who, with the mechanical nature of the deus ex machina, at the right moment, knowing that an oracle wants the city to make a human sacrifice for its salvation, accept - reciting a single stereotypical monologue - and immediately leaving the scene - to die with their throats cut. The case of Panagulis has this somewhat mechanical and inhuman simplicity. I still remember, here, that phrase from a patient in the Basaglia mental hospital: heroes are products of repressive societies. In Greece there are tyrants; as in Thebes or in Euripides' Argo. But, well, this is what I furiously ask myself, where is Athens? Then there was a democratic Athens, which, always with the mechanical nature of the deus ex machina, intervened against the tyrants of the neighboring cities, either to save or avenge the heroes. Where is

Theseus, the hero of democratic officialdom, who intervenes, while reluctant against violence? I don't see Tesei around. I only see weak heads of government, prudent ministers who send telegrams to people who are not worthy of receiving them. Panagulis does not ask for mercy. He rejects this relationship with tyrants. Since the "powerful" of the false cities of Athens, who call themselves democratic, take the fate of this hero to heart, let them do something seriously; and meanwhile they begin by not considering the Greek colonels worthy of receiving mail from them. You don't talk to colonels, first of all. There are many ways to scare them, to blackmail them, to put their backs against the wall. But evidently power has no national boundaries; all power is the same everywhere, and all those who hold it are linked to each other, fraternally: therefore telegrams are sent. There remain intellectuals, court jesters, like me, for example, who vent in these sad pages as an impotent person, incapable of having real experience, and capable only of watching over his conscience.

## A GHETTO ALSO FOR PANAGULIS

Turin, 21 November - I open the newspaper, tucked under the door. «Little hope for Panagulis». Why "little hope"? For Panagulis the hope is to die: therefore "lots of hope" for Panagulis! But he is wrong, because he doesn't know he is a hero. The moment he is called a hero, he is exorcised.

It is an everyday experience: one demands holiness from others, to keep one's conscience calm, the moment one realizes that they are not saints. But the moment you realize that they are, you consecrate them. Consecration discriminates against them, catalogs them: it makes them harmless, and even a little ridiculous and official. The repressive society creates heroes, and thus introduces them into its officialdom. Panagulis a hero; the colonels, realistically inevitable. And so we're good to go. But I, man, cannot bear the death of this man. Never have generic and objective offense to a sense of justice, and existential pity for those who suffer this injustice, united, produced such a strong and intolerable indistinct feeling of rebellion.

I become exasperated by the pain of impotence. The struggle between those in power - any power, even that of democratic countries - and those who dissent, is always unequal. Because those in power think of nothing else. While those who disagree have other, much more beautiful or, rather,

less abject and vulgar things to do. However, these "beautiful" things, these "not abject and vulgar" things are ultimately as guilty as the thought of power.

## THE STUDENTS PANIC

Turin, 21 November - From the window, up here on the eighth floor, come the shouts of the students. Disorderly, discordant shouts; conventional, because the shouts of the demonstrators also have a code: a pattern with which to "bring" their voices into unison; therefore, from afar, the shouts of every street demonstration are the same; but the distance corrects, filtering it through space, so indifferent to the meaning of those cries of protest, their conventional and slightly vulgar disorderliness; it makes them painfully mysterious: as if they came from another world; from another time; yes, from afar, the shouts of the demonstrators, in addition to being all the same in the present time, are also the same as those of the past; and these could be cries of ancient fascists: or of forgotten partisans (in the incredible spring of '45); after all, from above, Turin has not changed: its straight streets are lost against the old light mist of the beautiful cold days; and, above these brown blocks, flat and regular, painted in the foggy air as if in gauze, there is blue, damned blue (timid and atrocious sign of an intangible immaculateness of time: sky and nature, in comparison to which everything becomes painful: and those cries, more and more, are cries of any place and any time).

Those students - who, by shouting, cause panic - are perhaps demonstrating for Panagulis?

Does their mysterious cry, which comes in gusts, as if from the depths of time, or some future day, include protest against this murder?

It's the only hope. The world reduced to a sounding board that multiplies the same feeling millions of times. Public opinion - den of terrorism, seat of resignation - is shocked in its logical (crazy) terms by the presence of screaming students. Within public opinion there is therefore now another public opinion, which tears and shatters the first, exploding within it. Even this second public opinion, it is true, has within itself the seeds of a new terrorism: but it is being born, it is still free from it: it presents itself as hope, opposing resignation and the sinister memento mori of officialdom. The real future will perhaps contaminate it: but the ideal future towards

which it is projected makes it stupendous (those who were young in the times of the Resistance understand me). But young people are still unaccustomed to death. For them, that of Panagulis is one of the first cases of their existence being experienced. The vessel of bearability is almost empty for them. Their conscience is fulfilled - in a democratic fullness never seen before in the world - in protest, in struggle, in action, in the feeling of justice to be achieved. To our conscience this is no longer enough.

## WE ARE JUST HERE TO FIGHT

Turin, 22 November - This morning too, I wake up much earlier than the usual time. My tension is due a lot to my work these days. I try to go back to sleep, but I can't, because I know that on the floor of the room, in the dark, there is the "Courier" stuck under the door. I get up. I grab the newspaper. «Panagulis transferred to the island of Aegina: the execution of Panagulis did not take place this morning and will not take place...».

Human dimensions return. The curriculum of a life prisoner. The problem becomes historical again. Now we can start again. Solidarity is a very different duty than pity. Acting, fighting, is bearable. No memento mori: the future is with Czechoslovakian writers, with the black poets of America or the colonies, with Panagulis.

Turin, 23 November - I don't quite understand this struggle by students to have the right to "assemble" inside the school. Why inside? Why don't they hold their assemblies in the squares, in the gardens, in the attics? Why demand and obtain this freedom from "superiors"? And implement it in locations that are certainly not, by their nature, places of freedom? I know this: that whoever demands freedom doesn't know what to do with it. I therefore think that students should fight not to demand the implementation of rights from the authority: or at least, not only for this. But to claim, from themselves, to be the most important and real part of public opinion.

I say this because - as was to be expected - it was in reality the other public opinion, the official one, that counted in the ambiguous decision taken on Panagulis (the indefinite postponement of the execution). I want to say this: the fraternal authorities within NATO, from America to the Pope, have exerted pressure, in the name of their public opinion, on the colonels,

with the sole, implicit aim of not making them make a mistake. And all the better if this coincides with a gesture of mercy and democracy. Therefore, as the title of the «Corriere», which was also anxiously consulted this morning, says: «The push of public opinion prevails».

When these pages of mine are published in a week's time, Panagulis will no longer be news. Maybe he was right, as I now read in some of his naive poems: his death would have been more useful. But for no more than a week. However, another of his naive poems ends with this line: «Fight... fight... fight...». Yes, evidently we are only here to fight, not to win. When we are victorious, we will not know.

n. 50, 7 December 1968

# THE STUDENTS OF «RED SHADOWS»

«Culture at the service of the revolution»: this is the title of an article signed by «The representatives of the Student Movement present in Pesaro», which appeared in issue no. 5 of «Ombre Rosse» (a beautiful, if, let's say, somewhat terrorist, cinema magazine published in Turin).

What does it mean, the innocent reader will ask, "present in Pesaro"? Eh! «Pesaro» means the «Pesaro New Cinema Festival»: but among us experts it is enough to say «Pesaro» and we understand each other. It has become a place of the spirit...

The epigraph of this writing by the Student Movement is a famous phrase by Stokly Carmichael: «We are not interested in intellectuals for what they do, but for what they do for us». «Doing» must be understood in the Greek sense of «poeting»: certainly not in the pragmatic sense of «acting»: in that case Carmichael's phrase would be obvious.

It seems to me that this sentence is naive, and reflects Carmichael's racial inferiority complex. Wonderful and respectable naivety, then. What are intellectuals? Privileged, perhaps, among the outcasts? Or outcasts who are a little more privileged than others? Do they perhaps... have strong recommendations, within the system, so they can "do something" for the pure, totally innocent outcasts? Do intellectuals - again - perhaps hold a sort of power, so "they can do something for the most unfortunate of them"? But if this were the case, if the "intellectuals" enjoyed some mysterious "recommendation" within the system, or if they had some autonomous power, which would then end up being identified with that of the system, why ask them for alliance and help ? Wouldn't they be enemies or false friends?

The reality is this: that even the intellectual is an outcast, in the sense that the system relegates him outside of itself, catalogs him, discriminates against him, gives him a warning sign: therefore: either make him damned, or integrate him. You know. Even if apparently a little less unfortunate than the "poor black", the intellectual essentially lives the same experience of "diversity" as the black. The two are brothers in segregation, and in the fight they must wage against the system to "limit" (they cannot do anything else) its ability to "categorise and integrate them".

The "black" Carmichael is so immersed in his "otherness" as a black that everything white appears lucky to him. But, evidently, he is wrong. There

are various "lives not worth living" (Himmler), including many white lives (no one ever remembers that among those destined for the gas chambers, there are also gypsies and homosexuals, for example). So Carmichael tends to see intellectuals as fathers, who can do something for him. Now, however, I, an intellectual (lost in my "diversity" which is equally humiliating, although often consoled, as that of the blacks), I consider Carmichael as a father: and it is I who think that he can do something for me.

Beyond this game, one thing is therefore clear: that there is no difference between what an intellectual "does" and what an intellectual "does for someone" (in our case blacks). And I am not only talking about the progressive intellectual, who is politically aligned with those forces that fight alongside the blacks, but also about the intellectual who seeks, and obtains - in his practical life and in his political ideology - to be integrated (in the case , of course, of an intellectual who "does", that is, "makes poetry"). In fact, even this type of intellectual, despite himself, "does" ("doing poetry") "does for someone" even if indirectly, very indirectly.

Carmichael's sentence is therefore pleonastic. And, in my opinion, it should be corrected like this: "The intellectual, our brother in misfortune and cohabitant in our ghetto, whatever he writes, implicitly serves us: however, it would be better if he served us explicitly."

(By analogy to this black-intellectual parallel, it occurs to me to advise the reader to reread - as I was advised by the Turin critic Cariuccio - the pages of Marcel Proust dedicated to the Jewish-homosexual parallel, in the Recherche, volume II, Sodome et Gomorrhe, pages 614 and following of the edition of the «Pléiade».)

An existential revolt, i.e. made through one's own body, not only as a "theophany", an appearance in the present, but also as continuity in time (i.e. a revolt carried out through one's practical and corporeal existence), occurs at the level of the structure or superstructure ?

A black man who presents his "face" - nothing other than his face, that is, his existential negritude - in a cocktail made entirely of pure Anglo-Saxons, in a residential neighborhood, where even "Southern Europeans" are forbidden to live!, evidently accomplishes an act of revolt. With himself "being there", with himself "being there as a black man".

Well, the work of an author is like the face of a black man. It is with his very presence, with his "being there", that is revolutionary. And this, in my

opinion, does not happen at all on a superstructural level, but on a structural level. In fact, the entire structure is put at stake and in danger, by the mere "existence" of a black person's face or an author's work.

Another question. Is the «subjective self-projection» (this is the terminology of the Student Movement piece cited above) of an artist a partial or total experience?

Partial, evidently. But only partiality is exhaustive!

So the students are right: an artist is a mystifier when he wants to pass off his own partial subjective "self-projection" as total. But students are wrong in not considering this partiality as depth, as "actual" and not "proclaimed", totality.

n. 51, 14 December 1968

## FOR A DEMOCRATIC POLICE

Let's make an absurd hypothesis: the Student Movement takes power in Italy. Pragmatically, of course: without having foreseen it: out of pure impetus or ideological ardor, out of pure youthful idealism, etc. etc. We must "act before thinking": therefore... by acting anything can happen. Well. The Student Movement is in power: being in power means having the tools of power. The most visible, spectacular and persuasive instrument of power is the police. The Student Movement, therefore, would find itself at the disposal of the police.

What would he do with it? Would you abolish it? In that case, it is clear, he would immediately lose power. But let's continue with our absurd hypothesis: the Student Movement, seeing that it has power, wants to retain it: and this in order to change, finally!, the structure of society. Since power is always on the right, the Student Movement, therefore, to achieve the consistent higher goal of the "structural revolution", would accept a provisional regime - assembly, non-parliamentary, albeit - of the right, and therefore, among other things , should decide to keep the police at his disposal.

In this absurd hypothesis, as the reader sees, everything changes, and presents itself in a miraculous, I would say intoxicating, form. Only one thing doesn't change at all, and it remains what it is: the police.

Why did I make this crazy assumption?

Here it is: the police is the only place where no extremist could objectively criticize the need for "reform": when it comes to the police, one

can only be a reformist.

In Avola, what did the Power (the current Power: that of bourgeois, centralist parliamentary democracy) do? It caused four victims.

Through an old spirit of charity (which however coincides with a very current need for real democracy), I cannot say whether the two dead or the two policemen who shot are more unhappy.

Let's think for a moment: how did the Power create the two dead? Discriminating citizens into privileged citizens and non-privileged citizens. Creating high priced “human flesh” and low priced “human flesh”.

Being: 1) Sicilian (i.e. belonging to a pre-industrial and prehistoric area), 2) laborer (i.e. belonging to the poorest of the poor categories of workers), means being a man with a worthless body. Which can be killed without too many scruples (the police, for one, have done all sorts of things against students, human flesh of a fairly high average value, but have never shot at them).

And how did the Power itself create the two hitmen? It's simple: taking two of those "low cost" men (southerners, potential labourers) and transforming them from "poor" into "hit men" (to do this, it is enough for the Power to give a salary of forty thousand lire per month).

How does Power transform the poor into unaware instruments? (It is an easy operation: in fact the innocence of the poor is, because it is natural, defenseless; and it is through this "innocence" - political unconsciousness - that Power, in training centres, after having enticed some of the poor with the dream of forty thousand lire, creates conditioned reflexes: which are something very different from an education: and resemble much more the training of automatons than of men. The "innocent" poor are thus contrasted with the easily "corrupt" poor themselves. It is a well-known fascist technique, that of leveraging the sub-proletarian masses.)

I will be told: but you start from the assumption that the two policemen who shot are completely equal, in social origin and "culture", to the two dead. Yes - I reply - I start from the assumption that it better represents the average condition of policemen: the mass of policemen. It is true that physically, it may have been two old policemen who shot and killed, coming from unfortunate, atrociously uncultured, middle class backgrounds; but this is what would be the exception: this is what the "direct" intervention of Power would be, and which would not thus represent the typical nature of the "indirect" intervention, consisting in

pitting poor against poor, innocent against innocent. Both "marked", I would say, racially.

The Avola massacre has now become the pretext for asking for a "reform" of the police: consisting, meanwhile, in a first radical measure: that of disarming it.

It is nothing but a reform: and as such, its need is also felt by the enlightened part of the current Power. I think that even the most advanced and extremist part should support the immediate implementation of this reform.

In fact, disarming the police means creating the objective conditions for an immediate change in the policeman's psychology. An unarmed policeman is another policeman. The foundation of the "false idea of himself" that Power has given him, training him like an automaton, would suddenly collapse in him.

From this psychological "mutation" would derive, again "objectively", and perhaps in the very conscience of the policeman, the need for other reforms: that is, a new awareness of his own civil rights would arise in the "unarmed" policeman. And he himself would be the first to demand a new type of "professional training", which does not take advantage, so brutally, of his innocence and his poverty. Through this consciousness he would become a social democratic policeman, in fact, rather than a fascist one. Which is no small thing. Unless we want to exploit the deaths caused by the police: which however would put the opponents of Power at the same level of inhumanity as Power.

## LETTER FROM A HOUSEWIFE

Among the letters I have received in recent days, I would like to publish this one, which reaches me, signed, from Savona: «Dear Pasolini, we are acquitted! Let us rejoice in the name of poetry and justice. And forgive the plural: but if you had been found guilty I would have been guilty too, having seen the film on the only evening it was screened in Savona and which I found very beautiful, even if the characters are pushed towards the most extreme consequences. And the funny thing is - for me - this: I, a middle-aged housewife, so far from her in terms of life, culture and everything, I felt involved in her legal case only for the simple fact that I had understood the film and I had identified with it. those characters until

they feel "possible" and better. I don't know how to express myself but I would like to say one thing, very simple, basically: that the condemnation - if there had been one - would have affected the film but not you or your courage to say the things or for having said them in a given way; while with the film the condemnation would have reached me, a consenting and participating spectator but without the author's merits and justifications and therefore foolishly, gratuitously guilty! But I confess that in any case it would not have changed anything Because the truth can be revealed to us by anyone and even from very far away: the important thing is knowing how to recognize it."

The reader can judge for himself the precision, clarity and insight of this letter. I underlined the salient point: that it could even become a weapon in the hands of lawyers in a hypothetical trial similar to that for Teorema. In fact, one can logically postulate complicity on the part of the consenting spectator, just as the Public Prosecutor postulates an offense against modesty, let's say, in the dissenting spectator. The bond between film and spectator is profound: the spectator's identification with the characters or with their author is not an external and superficial fact: but essential: so much so as to determine the form of the film. I have said it many times on many occasions: the recipients of the film are part of the prosody of the film. This is why the "middle-aged housewife" (so intelligent) is, yes, right to speak of courage where perhaps the editors of "Red Shadows" (the Chinese magazine of Italian cinema) would speak of little courage: in fact, rather abstractly, they they do not calculate that in a film, what is little for them, the limited and chosen recipients, becomes enormous for the real recipients in their totality.

n. 52, 21 December 1968

## JOURNALISTS, OPINIONS AND TV

I was asked by a journalist why intellectuals collaborate so little, so reluctantly, with so little participation in television.

I replied to him by making a hypothesis, more or less in the following way: «Let's assume that television no longer represents, let's say, generically, Power, but, directly and concretely, Parliament. Let us assume, therefore, that it is directed by the representatives of the parties, who would thus have a share of responsibility on it proportional to their representation in Parliament. In this way the sources of information would multiply and at

the same time they would lose all formality. The viewer would end up being a child who hears his father speaking on the video (even if he is almost always indifferent and benevolent) and would become an adult "forced" by the very nature of the relationship to judge what is communicated to him. All authoritarianism and every degrading form of mass communication would fall: in fact, listening would necessarily become critical listening. How is it, for example, listening to Tribuna politica. In the hypothesis proposed here, it is clear that intellectuals would decide to enthusiastically participate in television broadcasts, each in their own ideological and political field: and it would be wonderful."

Because, the journalist asked me, intrigued and sceptically, what is wrong with television as it currently exists?

I answered him more or less: television's relationship with its viewers is exactly what it shouldn't be. It is:

a) Typically authoritarian: in fact there is no possibility of dialogue between the video and the viewer. The video is a teacher, and speaking from the video we necessarily speak ex cathedra. There is nothing to do, the video consecrates, gives authority, officiality. Even the comical, humble characters stand there with the air of having received a benevolent pat on the shoulder from those who are more powerful than them: indeed, from those who are Powerful par excellence. In short, the video represents the opinion and will of a single source of information, which is precisely that, generically, of Power. And it thus holds the listener in awe.

b) It is a mass medium: in fact, as a source of centralized information, it is manipulated for extra-cultural reasons, and its diffusion must take into account in advance the very low average level of the culture of the recipients, which it uses to enslave them.

The search for market demand that television carries out is typical of mass culture: where the "masse" is naturally interclassist: it is an atrociously indifferent and undifferentiated average of the demands of the workers, the bourgeois, the petty bourgeois, the peasants, the underclass: so that in reality none of the real needs of these various social groups of citizens are taken into account, but an unreal average is taken into account. So that television culture is a typically alienating culture.

For these reasons it is clear that an intellectual, theoretically, can only say "no" to television, at most resorting to some plea bargaining (in my case the

collaboration with TV 7, which presents itself as a protester against television within the television).

But the idea of collaborating on television tout court, as a new means of communication, characterized by the fact that the spectators are immense in number and their audiovision is simultaneous?

It is clear that there is no such thing as television in the abstract, as a pure technical problem. The problem of collaborating on television is always political, or, if we want, one of conscience. It is not even possible to collaborate on television as a "second job": something that literary figures are often forced to do. In fact, there are, technically well defined, the "second professions" of journalism, teaching, cinema, etc. While television has not yet defined itself as an autonomous, i.e. concrete, technique. It is a set of techniques, which have in common the fact that they are audiovisual (theatre, cinema, spoken journalism), and that they can be fixed through "reproduction". The only autonomous moment of the television communication medium is the "live broadcast": but this mode of communication has not yet become a "language", nor, I would say, by its nature, will it ever become one. What then does the television profession consist of, for an "author", if a television "language" does not exist? Making cinema for television? Making theater "reproduced" for television? Okay, we could do this (and sometimes we do it): but to make this decision we must first examine all the political and moral problems that we mentioned above...

Here the journalist seemed a little disconcerted, faced with such rigour: what about all those intellectuals who actually collaborate on television?

Oh, I don't judge anyone. Those are their problems. I understand them. And if I had no other job to live on, perhaps I would accept the compromise. On the other hand, much of the best Italian "intelligence" is employed on television.

Rather, the objection I would make to myself is another.

Precisely today when parliamentary democracy, the falsely democratic "delegation", and the parties, all the parties, as centralistic, bureaucratic and official, are the object of the most violent criticism from young people, I speak of parliamentary and party television, of a kind of great political Tribune?

Of course. Young people do not criticize television as it is now. They don't notice it, they don't take it into consideration. Perhaps they are users

of it: thus creating a (somewhat schizoid) dissociation between themselves as television users and themselves as revolutionaries.

Perhaps for students, television belongs to that order of facts so low and despicable that they are not worthy of contestation. The students go to protest Avignon, not Sanremo. But if television were partisan and parliamentary, and its level suddenly rose dramatically, from its current level of flatness, to the level of truly cultural and real communication, then it is certain that young people could not pretend not to notice. They would be forced to realize this: and to direct their anti-parliamentarian and anti-party criticism to television. And therefore wanting an even more advanced and free television. Maybe they would decide to occupy it. Let's hope!

## DRUGS AND CULTURE

Why do we take drugs? I don't understand it, but I explain it somehow. People take drugs due to lack of culture.

I am speaking, of course, of the great majority or average of drug addicts. It is clear that those who take drugs do so to fill a void, an absence of something, which causes confusion and anguish. It is a substitute for magic. Primitives are always faced with this terrible void within themselves. Ernesto De Martino calls it "fear of losing one's presence"; and the primitives, in fact, fill this void by resorting to magic, which explains and fills it.

In the modern world, the alienation due to the conditioning of nature is replaced by the alienation due to the conditioning of society: once the first moment of euphoria (enlightenment, science, applied science, comfort, well-being, production and consumption) has passed, the alienated, he begins to find himself alone: he, therefore, like the primitive, is terrified by the idea of losing his own presence.

In reality, we all take drugs. Me (as far as I know) making films, others getting lost in some other activity. Action always has a drug function. «Che» Guevara took drugs through revolutionary action (the one theorized by romantic Castroism: acting before thinking); even the work needed to "produce" is a kind of drug. What saves us from actual drugs (i.e. from suicide) is always a form of cultural safety. Everyone who takes drugs is culturally insecure. The transition from a humanistic culture to a technical culture places the very notion of culture in crisis. The victims of this crisis

are above all young people. This is why there are so many young people who take drugs.

Lacking cultural certainties, and therefore the possibility of filling one's own void of alienated people, if only through self-analysis and conscience (individual and class), also means, in banal terms, being ignorant. The crisis of culture means, in fact, that many young people are literally ignorant. In short, that they no longer read, or that they do not read with love.

It should be added: ignorant young people who do not take drugs, and who perhaps take drugs through specialized political action (which is a particular form of ignorance), are very often bad, inhuman, merciless, unpleasant: just like the cruel neocapitalist technical culture (against which they are fighting) wants them.

Instead, the "ignorant" young people who take drugs are, in general, good, sweet, compassionate, full of charity, apostolic, disarmed, non-aggressive, trusting (just like the primitives): their contestation in re, that is, in their own body, it is much more terrible and moving. Yes, if they were capable, they would have the full right to throw the first stone. Unlike the top-of-the-class extremists, who speak like (bad) printed books, they have burned bridges: they have made any possibility of integration impossible.

However, their revolt, although terrible and moving, is useless: precisely because it is devoid of culture, or outside of culture. After all, it is easy to be good and sweet like primitive people, it is easy to be pitiful because of the terror that comes from the void in which we live.

On the other hand (and this is the despairing conclusion) freeing ourselves from this "lack of culture" or "cultural interest" seems impossible; in fact it probably comes from a more general sense of "fear of the future". Never as in recent years (in which "forecasting" has become a science) has the future been a source of so much uncertainty, so similar to an indecipherable nightmare.

n. 53, 28 December 1968

# 1969

## AT THE STADIUM THE PASSION DOES NOT CHANGE

The last match I attended was the match between Torino and Inter, two or three Sundays ago. I went there on a gray day in Turin with Mario Soldati. Torino won (for which, on that occasion, I held on, albeit with great effort: because the... class - yes, I repeat, this horrendous word, the "class" - of Inter fascinated me - even if it was manifested, and in fragments, only in the first half: especially through Corso ("class" does not always mean sympathy: it is like grace: cruel).

That Sunday, Bologna lost (I have the impression, undeservedly, to Herrera's Roma) by two to one. What a pain! What a pain! I am a Bologna fan. Not so much because I was born in Bologna, but because I returned to Bologna (after long, epic, or epic-lyrical, stays in the Po valley) at the age of fourteen, and I started playing football (after having despised this game so much - I who only loved playing war). The afternoons I spent playing football on the Prati di Caprara (I played for six or seven hours at a time, uninterruptedly: right wing, then, and my friends, a few years later, would call me the "Stukas": I remember sweetly) are They were undoubtedly the best of my life. It almost gives me a lump in my throat when I think about it. Back then, Bologna was the most powerful Bologna in its history: that of Biavati and Sansone, of Reguzzoni and Andreolo (the king of the pitch), of Marchesi, of Fedullo and Pagotto. I have never seen anything more beautiful than the exchanges between Biavati and Sansone (Reguzzoni was somewhat taken back by Pascutti). What Sundays at the Municipal Stadium! But, strange to say, everything has changed in these thirty years. I remember that time as if it were the time of a dead man; everything has changed, but Sundays at the stadiums have remained identical. I wonder why...

n. 1, 4 January 1969

## MY PROVOCATIVE INDEPENDENCE

When these pages come out, that is, in the first week of 1969, perhaps I will have changed my mood, and the same situation will present itself to me under a different sign. This is my situation, and the sign under which it now presents itself to me is that of terror. I write these lines in one of those

moments when perhaps it would be necessary to remain silent. Also because a craftsman knows well that his object cannot be built with trembling hands. In fact, my hands are shaking.

There is no precise reason that justifies this trembling of mine, this feeling of being like a hunted beast, which has lost all dignity, and becomes rigid in writing a compulsory weekly piece for a newspaper. There are impalpable, and ultimately everyday, reasons. However, there is a flavor in them, which I know well... I list them: 1) The Police Headquarters has not yet given permission to collect the seized copies of Teorema. My producer, Franco Rossellini, is desperate. This is of incalculable harm to him. The reader is not required to know this, and he may think: «These are things that happen to producers, who after all deserve them...». The fact is that sales abroad and the consequent releases are all blocked; and therefore the economic situation is disastrous for a young producer who has no other cards to play. Why isn't permission given to release the film and put it back into circulation? Was he not acquitted? Didn't we jump for joy when we heard the sentence from the Venice court? The film has been in quarantine for four months; an entire season. In the meantime, another film has been reported, seized, judged, acquitted, released from seizure and put back into circulation; in a fortnight. Teorema is still at the same point. The comparison makes it clear that it is, towards me, a precise desire for persecution (that's the terrible word): and if this desire exists, what else awaits me? And if there is, where is it? In which sector of Power? Who do I particularly offend and who do I measure myself against? (As the reader can see, it is a situation which, if metaphorized just a little, becomes typical of Kafka's characters.) I am here, like a crushed worm, struggling, and I don't know who crushed me, and who wants to crush me again. Now, I wouldn't make this argument if I belonged to a regular "opposition", if I belonged to the ranks of the "enemies of power": instead, even there, I am an irregular. Even in the "power opposed to power", there are sectors (equally obscure and unspecified) that voluntarily try to hit me, to eliminate me... (the terminology of persecutory syndromes continues: from which, however, I am not objectively affected).

In fact: 2) I learned from my own producer that an authoritative friend, a sort of magician, told him: «Yes, yes, it's useless to help Pasolini, sooner or later they'll put him in prison. He doesn't know how to make films, let him be a writer." She's been one, for years. The script was already ready. The

imagination already in motion, desperately. Now I can't do it anymore. I don't say how or why. 4) I learned by chance this morning, from a person who always gives me bad news, that a director (belonging to the opposition intelligence) violently attacked me. It is just yet another attack: but there is always the attack that goes beyond endurance, precisely because of a pure and simple numerical fact. A certain amount of displeasure can be tolerated: beyond a certain limit it can no longer be tolerated. But terrifying, for those who remember that that same person, powerful and magical, had told him about ten years ago: «Be careful, you are followed, they want to hurt you", and then all the atrocious trials followed, which tortured me until two or three years ago. 3) I wanted to make a film on the life of Saint Paul at all costs

Now, at the beginning of a new year (it just so happens that this examination of my situation coincides with the beginning of a new year) what should I propose to do? I am completely alone. And, what's more, in the hands of the first one who wants to hit me. I'm vulnerable. I'm blackmailable. Perhaps, it is true, I also have some solidarity: but it is purely ideal. It can't be of any practical help to me. It is clear that, in the struggle against power, a certain form of power must be opposed: if only as prestige. At this moment, thank God, they help me, in this sense, by the miserable success of my works abroad: Oedipus Rex in France, Theorem in Germany, A violent life and so Theorem book in England, etc. Plus the persistent prestige of the Gospel here and there around the world: especially still in the United States. Etc. etc. It is terrible to say these things publicly: but it is a question of making petty calculations, to see how to budget for a certain amount of security against petty but atrocious "persecutions". Once these calculations are made, if they add up, I will be able to maintain my independence: my provocative independence. This is in fact (much more than envy, due to I don't know what my excessive successes, due to I don't know what my ability to work - as my friends tell me - but I don't know how to imagine envy as something real, something to take into consideration) which gives rise to so much hostility against me. My independence, which is my strength, implies loneliness, which is my weakness. I hate - as I have said many times - political independence. Mine is therefore an independence, let's say, human. A vice. I couldn't do without it. I'm a slave to it. I couldn't even boast about it, make a little boast about it. However, I love solitude. But it is dangerous. I could praise it and

indulge in the joy that comes from endlessly praising it. Perhaps it is a nostalgia for the perfect solitude enjoyed in the mother's womb. In fact, I'm almost certain that this is it. But tell me, how can a fetus live among adults? I could have, at the beginning of a year, drawn up a program of ideological struggle, objectively courageous (as more or less, objectively, it will be). But what does the courage of an ideological struggle consist of, then? Give up some earnings? Having to pay lawyers? Risk a few months in prison? Any slanderous accusations? Some blackmail and racist persecution? Yes, it's all here. I repeat, there isn't much to boast about. They are simply the rights of an existence that go to waste. But the real tragedies consist in things like these.

Sorry, patient reader, for these stupid complaints.

n. 2, 11 January 1969

## COMISSO: A PURE WRITER

Not far from here - from Padua - Comisso died. I recently read, by chance, a few pages of his unpublished diary. And this stay of mine in Veneto - with the short trip to Pola - reminds me of certain situations in Comisso. Faced with similar situations he reacted instinctively: he responded to life with life. Writing in him is non-existent, it shines through so much on things; and she is so convinced and without uncertainties. In his manuscripts, there is no deletion, no repentance, no variant. Comisso's certainty in the face of things was almost brutal; and so is his certainty in the face of writing. Writing in one go was the only conceivable way of writing for him. He sucked from reality like a giant child, without thoughts. His pages are among the purest and most absolute of our time.

n. 5, 1 February 1969

## COMISSO MAN AND WRITER

"It's truly a tropical evening, it's still hot and the sun has set, leaving cut bunches in the warmth."

I read this sentence by Giovanni Comisso in a small room, on the top floor of an old house whose windows overlook the Mercerie.

The evening is cold and humid. The remnants of yesterday's fog lie on the sea. The steps of the rare passers-by seem to flee: but towards some place absurdly assigned to a secret and simple happiness.

The sea, however (which a land dweller feels looming like a ghost, albeit a sleeping one), is fatally warm. This shadow, indefinable and probably dreamed of, of warmth, links this evening to the tropical evenings experienced by Comisso a few years ago, or a few decades ago: yesterday, almost today.

I too have lived them, and I live them. Funeral: like him, it seems, today. Even more so, since in this little room on the Mercerie there are young, simple people, with their weak but arrogant twenty years old (even less), their white or blue t-shirts, their well-polished shoes, their scruffs full of purity.

They laugh even if they don't want to: their desire to laugh is as powerful as their shyness. Even if his smile sometimes freezes, like a poor bead on the edge of his eye, with its brown or blue pupil, it is always victorious. Bravado is linked to humility. That laughter, or smile - or laughing and almost crying shyness - is like the warmth of the sea. It binds, through the cold of this winter evening, the fog, the length of the days that are now those of winter, and they will have to pass slowly one by one as they have already passed, to the tropical evenings, which we all experience together, in other moments (which, look!, are summer), here in Veneto, among the vineyards of Treviso, or on the washed out and empty lagoon, with its two blues of the sea and the sky...

We are like grapes, not yet cut. But let's look, in the warmth, at the cut bunches.

Recisi is an elegant word, and also bunches, in the mouth of those who say "rapi": "cut bunches" is therefore a translation, which means first of all "rapi tajai" and then "past lives, with their lifeless bodies left on earth". The warmth is the eternity of bodily life: the happiness of which is terrifying, in a pleasant way and so difficult to express, that it can only be vaguely alluded to. We all feel within ourselves the terrible thud that the word warmth causes, alluding to the tragic nature of the beauty of life in the very moment (a summer at the end, but as hot as the tropics) in which we live.

The laughter of the young friends is without interruption, like chains of rings welded to each other, and, disorderly, now thrown into a pile, now stretched. They will not end even when the night ends. Sleep will be a tangle of those rings in which youth, even when serious, severe or desperate, or shy, laughs. The tangle will be resolved when the age at which one is a child is no longer, unexpectedly, the same: and this right to have

laughing eyes belongs to others. That warmth of a few years ago, or of a few decades ago, I repeat, is equivalent to the cold of this night, in which, however, you can keep the windows open, to collect the presence of the eastern sea.

Precisely because I didn't really love Comisso that much, because of the dangers that my "zeal" saw in the cult of the unconditional love of life, of youthful pragma, with its reckless yet always innocent actions, I now feel in its pure state the pain of his physical distance, due to death. What he severed offends me much, much more than what offends me in life which, with the same glorious stupidity and marvelous arrogance - which he glorified with almost blackmailing violence - now continues without his testimony, nor his participation, apparently greedy, but actually timid.

It was actually a frenzy of feelings and words, that of Comisso in the face of youth. He, in reality, was much more of a saint than a sinner. I could swear that he preferred to contemplate things rather than use them.

The possibility of using things, a young body, a vineyard with its bunches, a sultry sunset, or, rather, all this as a single thing, actually satisfied him.

I believe that, in conclusion, he abused very little this orgy - safe for him, and theoretically indisputable - of using the beauty of things, of life. Continuously attracted by this possibility, in reality I believe that he was very sparing in his actions: he was satisfied by being able to do, by the generous availability of life. Perhaps he never wanted to experience this full and intoxicating generosity too much, so as not to be disappointed. (Life is generous indiscriminately, it does not choose values and feelings; pains and pleasures are equivalent in it; possibilities are distributed indifferently between them.) For Comisso, the generosity of life was instead theoretically only in the direction of joy; as life itself is joy, and it would be foolish to come to different conclusions through different experiences. Better therefore to contemplate life in its warmth; source of joy, dispenser of cheerful bodies, of divine hours, in any season.

Comisso had raised childish barriers around himself to defend his security. This certainty of his was then projected onto his pages, which had to be equally certain. A repentance, a rethinking, a variant, an erasure would have been evidence of "different possibilities": while the possibility of everything is unique. Comisso would never have admitted the presence of alternatives: like the saints. Poor saint from Treviso, a sinner and with

few pretensions, even miserably attached to the goods of life! Stubbornly «without worries»!

I now want to report here, in full, a page from Comisso.

## THE UNPUBLISHED

In the restaurant I noticed two young people who almost looked alike, above all they looked alike in their short, curly hair and in their twenty-year-old scent. I wanted to pour myself into them, I pricked them with questions about love, about their love, they defended themselves with lies, but I understood that theirs was a love with small successes and many renunciations and yet only if they had had the strength to want, to demand, they would have had the most splendid offerings at their feet, but they did not dare; one said that he would not have loved if he had not had a response of equally sincere love in the woman. His theme was scholastic, collegial. He didn't know that love is aroused by man's aggressive behavior. But suddenly an Alpine soldier entered the room and as soon as they saw him, shouting his name like mad, they left me and ran to him to kiss and hug him. I sat down again by the hearth and stoked the half-extinguished logs. I was bored and went into the other room where the others were. The Alpine soldier was sitting on a high stool next to the tavern counter, he looked like a weathervane on a high chimney flapping in the winds. He continually turned this way and that, now towards one of his newfound companions, now towards the other. Everyone seemed to adore him, he was twenty years old consolidated by the military uniform, by being recognized as a man capable of carrying weapons; everything overlapped and merged into aggressive symbols with the aggressive reality of the twenty years: the eagle feather on the hat, and the weapons attributed even if he didn't have them with him were the officially proclaimed twenty years, by this remnant of the tribe that it is our state society and the others were adoring the barracks-smelling nonsense that he said without stopping for a moment, always interjecting a blasphemy, which came out as an echo of the chorus of his Alpine companions. He had broken his leg skiing but he didn't care, they could even have cut it off, he wouldn't have worried, at twenty years old your legs can be reborn. He pulled up his trousers to show the cast and spat on them. He had an enormous mouth, when he laughed it must have measured about 15 centimeters, and a set of teeth as firm and perfect as the

grains of corn, one tooth close to the other and all shiny and if he stuck out his tongue to mock his friends, that tongue seemed like a tongue. of greedy sheep to tear out every blade of grass...

## THE «CROCODILES»

I hope that the reader, troubled by the splendor of this page from Comisso's unpublished diary, realizes the injustice of the farewell that the Italian community gave him. Any poppy, literary or political, dies and the nation is in mourning. Silly, idiotic nation! A poet dies, and a few indifferent columns are dedicated to him: with definitions such as "poet and globetrotter", in which "poet" is equivalent to "globetrotter" and "globetrotter" to "poet". In short, a buffoon died. I hope to die first, than many of my other friends, so as not to have to face similar "crocodiles". Of course, Comisso, he was nobody's fool, even if he was wonderfully funny, humble, as serious poets are. So no one felt cheated on him. Nor the conservatives, for whom serious poets must be serious; nor the new neo-Zhdanovist generations, for whom, equally, serious poets must be serious poets. At least the other writers, my colleagues, had had some accent, not just of pity and pain - absolutely inapplicable to Comisso, who left "without worries", and not caring about them - but at least of critical intelligence. I don't understand where the intelligent critics have gone. There was some. Until the early sixties. Then they disappeared. Intelligence and compassion have shone in someone's soul, I know, for having observed and understood it through my own experience. Now they are like empty husks. At the service of this or that, of the parties or of the cultural industry; or they have actually worn themselves out, wandering into a new era like larvae. Perhaps they felt their impotence to establish the true values (the task of the critics) which are now established elsewhere. While the young people (there are about ten very good ones, not neo-Zhdanovists) still don't have authority: either they don't want to have it (through conscious renunciation, and that's fine; or out of cowardice, so as not to oppose fraternizing and blackmailing ideologies, and this is bad). But perhaps once again I am complaining stupidly, because I cannot accept the just end of a world.

n. 6, 8 February 1969

## PRAGUE: AN ATROCEABLE FREEDOM

On the walls of the city where I live these days - Padua - a writing has reappeared that I hadn't seen for many years, at least since 1956: "Down with the reds". Padua is a city where Catholicism is not at all burdened. People are elusive due to a profound shyness; the features of the faces - strong, popular - fade into a kind of desire not to be; or to be barely there: or to be there just long enough that it doesn't disturb; massive guests, pale-skinned and dull-looking, of a deeply established, but profoundly inhospitable world. However, I don't believe that it is only in Padua that writings such as "Down with the reds" have reappeared and the "civic" spirit has started moving again. These writings and this spirit made their reappearance following the suicide of Jan Palach. If I were now to give a rational-realistic judgment on this suicide, I could therefore only give a cynically negative judgement. However, in this case I would use utility and opportunity as a yardstick. I would ask myself: "Was it useful and appropriate for Jan to set himself on fire?" And I would answer: «No: it wasn't useful or appropriate. In fact, what did he achieve? Processions of social democrats, liberals and reactionaries passed through the cities of Western Europe; and the walls of these cities have been filled with old anti-communist inscriptions." But I don't use the yardstick of utility and opportunity. If Jan had made these calculations, perhaps he would have saved his life: but he would not have been free to express himself. Even if in his case the freedom to express himself was atrocious.

Instead, he implacably implemented his suicidal will and desperation. He followed through with his insanely idealistic decision. He wrote his terrible poem of him down to the last line.

If he was then exploited, so much the worse for those who exploited him. Did he perhaps have to humiliate his own idealism, bargaining with the various possible public opinions, which would have judged his gesture and would have done so, inevitably, in a vulgar way?

Those who exploited this boy did not ask themselves (either out of eternal stupidity or bad faith) the simple question: «In what environment, in what world did this boy live to reach such a high level of idealism as to kill himself as he did? ?". To such a question they should have answered: "In a red world." And this would have put their marches and their signs in crisis.

I mean: for a bonze, killing himself with fire is part of an idea of the world; it is - pardon the expression - a religious technique; his mind has never been so far from such a solution as not to conceive it. In a world that

is no longer religious, no longer archaic, no longer peasant, this idea is, on the contrary, inconceivable. To conceive it, and appropriate it, one must be driven by an ideal will just as inconceivable as the religious one of the bonze. But while for the bonze the Western bourgeoisie - right-thinking, conservative, or social democratic, or simply fascist - carries out (atrocious) racial discrimination and is relatively moved towards him - instead recognizing in a Czechoslovakian boy - white, of Western culture, cultured, rational, citizen of an industrialized world - a brother, remains, on the one hand, objectively much more dismayed, and on the other, he immediately hastened to express his dismay.

The racist injustice of the bourgeoisie which does not do for the bonzes what it does for a young Bohemian student is therefore evident.

Jan protested against Soviet power by setting himself on fire. He had every reason to make such a protest (even if the idea of his suicide is intolerable: which each of us tries, with all his strength, not to think and not imagine). However, objectively, his protest is not anti-communist. On the contrary, he demonstrates what level of idealism a young communist, born and raised in a communist world, can reach. Idealism that allowed him to perform a gesture worthy of an ancient hero; of a modern Vietnamese saint.

## PETTY-BOURGEOIS INVOLUTION

I was in Czechoslovakia a few years ago, when everything exploded, it was boiling; I made friends with many Czechoslovakian writers and filmmakers; one of them even became one of the protagonists of a drama in verse that I wrote, in fact, about a Czechoslovakian poet (about his history from 1939 to today: which forced me to read up on the Czechoslovakian situation better); I met some young Bohemian students who were partying (at the famous club, the «Viola», which was the center of the protesting youth); I listened to a long report from Longo to the intellectuals on Czechoslovakia, a few weeks before the Soviet invasion: from all of my, albeit chaotic and approximate, Czechoslovakian experience, I can draw the conclusion that indeed, in Czechoslovakia, liberalization had westernizing colors; and, together with the rigorously Marxist need for the liberalization of socialism through the distribution of central power and the consequent decentralisation, a regressive tendency to conceive liberalism as classical liberalism is also visible. But it was inevitable that this was the case: this

was the "national path to socialism" of Czechoslovakia, a country with a "bourgeois" centre, of great bourgeois civilization like Prague, and partly industrialized before the communist power. However, a certain Bohemian nostalgia towards Westernized forms of life - lost - does not justify the Soviet intervention in any way: if in the USSR, moreover, the danger of a petty-bourgeois involution is much more substantial and devoid - at least it seems - of a real and profound internal dialectic: that is, devoid not only of formal opposition, but also - at least it seems - real.

## SANREMO: POOR IDIOTS

The beautiful panorama ends in Spain, to whose pain we are hardened. There is nothing more to say; or there is everything to start saying again. Among all these deaths, the Sanremo Festival began and ended. The cities were deserted; all the Italians were gathered around their televisions. The Sanremo Festival and its songs are something that irreparably disfigures a society. This year, then, things went even worse than usual: because there was a protest, albeit barely mentioned, at the Festival. What is in fact contested are the prices of the tickets to listen to those poor creatures who sing those poor idiocies: and we are protesting moralistically against the privilege of those who can pay the price of those tickets. We don't realize that all sixty million Italians, by now, if they could enjoy this famous privilege, would pay the price of that ticket and go to attend the Sanremo show in the flesh. It's not a question of few being able to pay those miserable twenty thousand lire but it's a question of everyone, if they could, would pay it. Everyone, workers, students, rich, poor, industrialists, labourers. The hundred thousand unfortunates who plug their ears and cover their eyes in front of this crazy bestiality are inhabitants of a ghetto who look at each other in shock, without hope. And most don't even dare to talk about it: because talking about it sincerely, to the point of indignation, is as unpopular as anything else. It is to avoid risking this unpopularity that the protesters are so discreet in this case. But it is a wrong calculation, which makes them worthy of the "innocent" integrated singers and their audiences.

n. 7, 15 February 1969

## A DAY IN BOLOGNA

Bologna, 10 February

How about? A young man without a driving license is sleeping in a car, in front of a petrol pump, while the young man with a driving license, who is driving the car, has left and gone to the bathroom: the petrol station attendant abruptly wakes the sleeper and tells him to move and make room for the other machines; the sleeper obeys and moves the car - by backing up, to maneuver and position himself near the bar - by two metres. The traffic policeman is there, in the person of a young man with a black mustache who looks a bit like Guareschi, and intervenes. Well, in conclusion, the young man received three months in prison today at the Court of Bologna. How about? Three months in prison for moving the car two meters backwards. The car was mine, I had given it to Ninetto, Ninetto had lent it to the young man with the license, etc. What strikes me in this fact is that the judge, in this judgment, was not the President of the Court of Bologna: no. The judge was the road soldier who resembles Guareschi. The President of the Court of Bologna did not have space (as they say today) within the Highway Code in which to move and judge, in the legal and human sense of this word. At the moment in which the soldier drew up the report which showed that the young man had moved the car by two meters (albeit in front of a petrol pump, at the request of the petrol station attendant) the sentence had already been pronounced, without appeal, and the Judge Bolognese had only a purely formal function. Here is one of the hundreds of changes to the functioning of Justice that urgently need to be made.

What is it about Bologna that is so beautiful? Winter with the sun and snow, the barbaric blue air on the terracotta. After Venice, Bologna is the most beautiful city in Italy, I hope this is known. (I remember a dream I had in '45, in Casarsa, in which I seemed to be in a city that was a mix of Venice and Bologna: the porticoes that were reflected in the narrow canals; the Venetian stone embroidery was red; in the deep in a neighborhood with no outlets like a labyrinth, where vice terrifies an adolescent.) Today in Bologna there is the Congress of the Communist Party.

Only at Christmas and Easter is there such joy and anxiety in people's gestures for something that is reconfirmed as new. Except that now at Christmas and Easter this joy is neurotic and silly: while here there is a kind of reasoning calm which, rather than making it hateful, communicates it. I know, I know well, that behind this first, authentic feeling, there is a sick and terrible feeling, against which we must fight (and against which, to tell

the truth, I no longer need to fight, because, by hook or by crook, I got rid of it). I mean the feeling of the horde; the feeling of belonging to a community and to the spirit of this community; enjoying and getting drunk on something nominal and pre-established, or at least peaceful, that unites us. I enter the Sports Palace (protected by perfect security) welcomed by the complicit smiles, both filial and paternal, of the workers, who are there working for their party: as they can, with their physical strength, with their simple zeal. The enormous red curtain with the tricolor flags, the stands with the leader, the crowd of delegates (with their intense, severe, open, strong faces: the health of the working class is not yet entirely a legend; the gray of their clothes and the dignity of their bodies, it is true, are not objectively the same as in the bourgeois, as is sometimes feared) recreate, as always, the air of '45, '46.

n. 9, 1 March 1969

## CLEAR WORDS ABOUT PALACH

Here is one of the many letters that have reached me in recent days, signed (with a beautiful Tuscan surname): I read «Tempo» which I receive by subscription. It's a good weekly. The page of the late Quasimodo (...). In today's issue of «Tempo», which I read a little, I lingered on a page that bears his signature. But do social democratic demonstrations bother you so much? And the anti-communist writings? It is clear that he is a good communist, and I respect, if not her, at least her party. The Communist Party, or another name, but performing the same function, would have to be invented if it didn't exist. I have been a social democrat since before the famous "nineteenth" and my life teaches me that the parties that are in the hot seat (?) need the opposite current. And this regardless of common social issues. And never mind that poor Jan Palach, if to remember him you have to do it in a denigrating way. And here I stop, but everything on this page should be contested. I'm not a writer, but an innkeeper. Anyway, I greet you. (signature)

Now I make the following observations:

The person who writes to me is neither vulgar nor unpleasant (on the contrary!): instead the cultural framework in which he operates and makes judgments is vulgar and unpleasant. My correspondent is in fact sincerely modest: however he turns his sincere modesty into a false modesty; and again, the objectivity of him - of those who contemplate from the margins -

is sincere: but he manages to make his sincere objectivity a false objectivity. And this despite himself. In fact he concludes his letter by saying that I denigrate Jan Palach: while, however humbly cultured he is, he cannot fail to have understood the literal meaning of these absolutely simple and clear sentences: «I do not use the yardstick of utility and opportunity [to judge Jan Palach]"; «If he was then exploited, so much the worse for those who exploited him. Did he perhaps have to humiliate his own idealism, bargaining with the various possible public opinions, which would have judged his gesture, and would have done so, inevitably, in a vulgar way?"; and finally: «Idealism that allowed him to perform a gesture worthy of an ancient hero; of a modern Vietnamese saint."

If there is anyone who finds these phrases derogatory to Jan Palach, it would really be better if I stopped writing this column, and surrendered in the face of the implacable mental meanness of the media culture that surrounds me. Instead, I still don't stop writing this column and I don't give up: I have an ideal recipient in front of me: and this ideal recipient is a single person equal to me in every way (democratic equality). This is reality; even if my correspondent does not want to understand, he actually understands despite himself. In fact, as an average Italian citizen he is incapable of understanding, falsely modest and falsely objective: but as a "citizen" tout court, characterized and individual, he is capable of understanding, sincerely modest and sincerely objective. I firmly believe this: therefore there is no disappointment in my human and political relationships - however atrocious - that can definitively discourage me.

Another "distant friend" also writes me a letter "not indignant but amazed" about Jan Palach. I report the salient passage: The story is full of heroism. In all times under all skies there have been people who fought and gave their lives for an ideal! It is obvious that everyone expressed themselves according to what the situation required, etc. etc. She doesn't tell you anything about the heroism of Gabriella Degli Esposti who had her breasts torn out, her eyes etc. She had not grown up in a communist society, but a fascist one.

During this column I wanted to quote twice the phrase of a patient in the Gorizia mental hospital, directed by Basaglia: «Heroes are products of repressive societies». This applies to Gabriella Degli Espositi and to Panagulis: and, to a large extent, also to Jan Palach.

However, my intelligent "distant friend" must have understood from my intervention on Jan Palach how I placed the emphasis on idealism and sanctity, rather than on heroism. It should be noted that those who die for an "ideal" have not always been idealists all their lives, that is, by culture: in fact, the culture of "repressive" societies, which produce heroes, are not always idealistic: but they use to provide pseudo-ideals instead of the real ones (let's say, under fascism: God, Homeland, Family, etc.). There is a profound difference in meaning between the use of the word "ideal" and that of the word "idealism".

To the extent that Czechoslovakian society has been repressive in recent years, Jan Palach is a "hero". And in fact, Czechoslovakian society, Stalinist and revisionist, was repressive: with its police, with its international school for political leaders (which I believe is the most literally terrifying environment I have ever visited), etc. However, to the extent that Czechoslovakia was a nation of communist culture (despite the temporary state of degeneration, i.e. the aberration of even workers' power which, betraying the spirit of Marx, was - under pressure from Moscow - a centralist power , bureaucratic, police, i.e. right-wing), Jan Palach is an "idealist" and a "saint".

Always in these columns I reiterated from the first moment and very clearly my condemnation of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia: a more general condemnation of the entire Soviet communist world. Condemnation, however, pronounced from the left. The death of Jan Palach and the attitude of disapproval, albeit prudent, of Longo and the other Italian communist leaders towards the Soviet Union, had the effect, as far as I am concerned, of a rapprochement with the PCI: against which, moreover, the My polemic, even violent, had always been fraternal, and never implied "anti-communism".

n. 10, 8 March 1969

## FORTINI'S OBSESSIONS

A book of old poems by Franco Fortini has been published, Poetry and Error (Mondadori), old, I say, because already published, and written between 1946 and 1957. This is not a review of the book, but a marginal and pretextual note. In fact, I would have very little to say about the book: instead, for my note, I am interested in a small booklet or extract, inserted as a separate body between the pages of the volume. This is a group of

twenty-five recent poems, written from '61 to '68. They do not represent stylistically anything new compared to the previous work. They also take the form of an "escape from zeal", a rethinking in a pathetic zone - with twilight and metaphysical characteristics that make one think a little of Luzi - on topics covered elsewhere, and with much greater force, necessity and genius, from the author as essayist and moralist: as politician. What is curious in these poems, as regards my current interest in the political situation, are the stylistic references, on a somewhat naively metaphorical level, to the terminological world of war. In these same columns I had already spoken of the illusion, on the part of some leaders of youth movements, of a war being waged, partly underway, partly imminent: for which in any case we must prepare by considering ourselves in a state of emergency. And I was a bit ironic (very bitter, of course) about this zeal whose clumsiness can be explained in a very schematic, crude, brutal and even a little demagogic way: the war is made by the workers, and only the PCI can direct it . A war waged by young intellectuals, directed by the Student Movement or by «Quaderni Piacentini», is definitely unthinkable, and also lends itself to easy ironies (of which I am ashamed, and that something murky, bitter, unjust pushes me to Do).

Fortini's poems (old and recent) are a confirmation of the raison d'être of this sad irony of mine. All Fortini's poems have the air of being written during a "stop in the fight". (Which, after all, is essentially true.) Night falls, the shootings thin out, the warriors light the fire, and some sing on the guitar, some write letters home, and some gather in a dark corner, where they struggle the moon comes, and in the old notebook he writes his beloved verses. But it is clear, however, that for him the meta-historicity of the poetic act (which necessarily occurs precisely in a "stop", in a corner outside the action, in a secret fold of history) is only as valuable as it is still a rethinking of the struggle, through a simple change of register. I'll make a quick list of the war references in Fortini's poems. The second poem is entitled The Line of Fire, and begins: «The trenches were here»; and ends: «With haste and with mercy / we relieved. / Soon there will be an assault." The third poem is entitled Speech of the Governor, and ends with the line: «Do not look at those fires on the mountain» (fires of a mysterious army). The fourth poem is entitled After a massacre. Here is an excerpt: «On the walls the great imperial flags have changed. / Lives of friends become ghosts, I can't resist seeing them. / In anger against hedges of swords I look

for a little poetry. / Don't complain. I bow my head. You can't write anymore." In The difficulties of the paint factory: «We would be happy if we had to face / only enemies». In Dalla hill (a hill between montaliana and partisan): «Say how they killed us and the names of the enemies». From Consigli: «Of my pronunciation / the deaf and the clear sounds / do not separate them / because of necessary friends and enemies / they will always have news for you». From San Miniato: «If the dead could see, they would see like me. / They would hear this scream / of people being killed by force...". However, of all the poems, the element that until a year ago was necessarily called "structural" is the allusion to the struggle and the right to park: which always takes place in a place in the countryside or on a hill: a) similar to those of the partisan struggle, b) linked by mysterious analogies to the rural world of the Chinese cultural revolution. Even the three funeral memorials (Elio Vittorini, Raniero Panzieri, the father) resemble poetic tombstones for the fallen.

An obsession with war waged, therefore: which reflects, against a necessarily ambiguous poetic screen, the idea that Fortini currently has of the situation, as of an emergency situation: in which the poet must transform himself into a strategist, a soldier . If Fortini's idea of the situation were right and corresponded to reality, his metaphors would have a sense: if instead this idea was arbitrary and illusory, then those metaphors would have another sense. I believe in this second hypothesis. But Fortini, I think, needs to feel at war, because only in this case does he exist, and he finds a necessity for his existence. Peace (the "religion of everyday life") is something he did not have in his lot: he is only interested in it as a nostalgia, which grips him during the truce of the struggle. As a Jew by necessity, and as a politician by choice, Fortini has never had the right to peace. And this makes him a brother and dear to me. But his blindness to reality, and the fanaticism that cannot help but derive from it, pushes me to argue with him. We are not at war. The working class and the PCI don't want it. That of the Student Movement is an illusion of war. Therefore Fortini moves, thinks and works outside of reality: like poets... However, being a poet is a source of shame for him: he must look for excuses, he must attempt a sort of continuous, pathetic captatio benevolentiae among his rigid comrades in the fight, whose only valid category for judging a man is utility.

## A POEM «REDONE»

The idea of war to which Fortini continually refers is not real war (which is not fought in reality), but a purely metaphorical war; curiously archaic. It recalls the poor partisan war and even the war of 1915-18, with its trenches, its shootings, its farewells, etc. This metaphorical war is therefore, as a form of imagination, an archaic form and therefore a delayed content. There is no one who does not see here an incurable contradiction in the depths of the revolutionary Fortini. Moreover, he is aware of it: and this is very clear in the sense of linguistic modesty that he feels when he "pokes the poet": the poet alone with himself, intent on the old contemplations of "his" nature - with the eternal leaves , the woods, the seasons. Here Fortini's greatest concern seems to be to stylize and make comprehensible (and forgivable) through a kind of codification capable of being deciphered by everyone, the grazing and atrocious desperation of asceticism which has nothingness as its basis: an old Leopardian nothingness, Montalian, laid bare precisely by the stupendous indifference of nature and man as a creature. Which Fortini vainly tries to disguise, trying to transform this circumstance into a lesson (his ancestors used to speak of him with their finger raised); or seeking the complicity of a reader as a fighting partner. The result is a "remade" poem: which relives, in falsetto, the feelings of the serious poets (the fathers): Fortini's poetic Italian is so closely similar to that of Bassani. A modest mélo: the result of which is perfectly manneristic. Fortini is also in the grip of the dilemma: he cheats, pretending to be outside of it, in a different "tension". Not only those who are forced every day to live and struggle at a demeaning television and consumerist level, but they too are in the pattern: asceticism (albeit atheistic, poetic) or a zealous pact with action.

As for me, when I said bitterly before that the war is not wanted by the working class and the PCI, I said it by taking an ingloriously neutral and "realistic" attitude. And when I said that the Student Movement cannot wage war, I meant that war is made by armies, and that armies are institutions.

n. 11, 15 March 1969

## A SACRILEGIOUS TRANSFORMATION

Kaiseri is the ancient Caesarea (that of Cappadocia). You get there through a large desert valley, with a forgotten lake at the bottom, and

around sparse, regular violet mountains, with very gentle slopes that disappear insensibly into the valley whose land is darkened by the rain.

First a large factory appears on the right, new, but already aged and a little crumbling, and on the left, the village built for the factory workers: many small houses of all colors against the slope of a hill, as in the illustrations of the books of fairy tales of poor fairies. Alright then. The workers can also live in this funny village, you know. Then the city appears before your eyes. It is still Caesarea, even if today it is only the capital of a district in central Anatolia. I remember Saint Paul, and his letters seem to me to have been written yesterday. I have less love for the Caesar (I don't know which, I confess) who was its founder, or for all the other Kaisers who then held it, from the Seljuks to the Turkmen. It is they who have reduced it to that miserable, medieval, Levantine city that I imagine I am about to visit. I can already smell the spices and grease in the fuming alleys, teeming with poor people who don't know how they live: dust destined to settle and be catalogued, then - in the dark earth, crossed by shepherds - by teeming but immobile expanses of small stones . Instead, after walking along a dual carriageway, with modern houses and barracks, a few petrol stations, rows of people along the slightly uneven pavements, dressed in dark, with trousers and short overcoats of a vaguely Parisian cut, here we appear, behind a piazzale, the small city. Kaiseri was, visibly, razed a few weeks or months ago; and it was completely rebuilt on the ruins of its alleys, which still appear, like stumps, here and there, between the concrete and the windows. In the centre, the fort with Roman walls encloses an old souk where only plastic objects and mass-produced packaging are sold (as well as, of course, cheese and cereals).

From Kaiseri to Ankara it's a three or four hour drive, through deserted Cappadocia, with its petrol stations. Ankara is a metropolis under construction, with skyscrapers that mark the capricious plain under the old mountain where ancient Ancyra once stood, and still stands, in all its stratifications: two rows of ancient and medieval city walls, the souk, the Capernaum. But it is distant, separate, fumigating. Ankara is now a kind of Manhattan, dispersed and fragmented, brand new on the mud.

From Ankara to Rome it is three or four hours by plane. I arrive in Rome: EUR, Viale Cristoforo Colombo, Garbatella partly rebuilt in neo-capitalist style, etc. The difference between the new Rome and the new Ankara consists only in the fact that Ankara is newer, and has Manhattan as its

model. But both the notion of ancient Rome and the notion of ancient Ancyra are completely overwhelmed and deformed: it is not said that the "meaning" or the "feeling" of a classical or medieval wall does not change due to the presence, looming or even quite respectfully distant, from other walls: the "semanthemes" of cities change, but the change (as in the cases I am dealing with) can be degeneration.

From Rome to Arezzo there is the same distance as from Ankara to Kaiseri. As soon as I get off in Rome I take the car and, in two hours on the motorway, I reach Arezzo. Reddish, measured, with its dimensions of a stupendous small city of the past, Arezzo appears against a background of low faded hills, on a modestly cultivated plain, with Tuscan accuracy and order. But here too, on the right, a large factory, brand new, on the soft green of the wheat. And then the workers' houses: judicious little houses, which manage to make the countryside poor: poor precisely because they are just a little rich. There is nothing more depressing than a little comfort. And here it is: the stupendous appearance of Arezzo, with its humble, glorious towers, its bell towers so more municipal than clerical, its "immense smallness", is disturbed, damaged, oppressed, deformed, disappointed by the casual and disorderly appearance of the 'Modern Arezzo. Which isn't particularly bad, mind you: on the contrary, everything is done with a certain... grace. Like in Caesarea in Cappadocia.

In short, an ideal axis unites Kaiseri and Arezzo in the laboratory for an occasional experiment. At the two extreme limits of the axis there are two similar cases. The transformation of the "meaning" of which the city is "significant": a transformation that occurred through accumulation, disordered and sacrilegious.

Blasphemy by whom?

For me, for example: who nevertheless wants, from this very moment, to force myself to no longer have this feeling of sacrilege, which implies now desperate, impotent and therefore arid nostalgias.

However, it is not sacrilegious, at the same time, for a young American or for a red guard: the former is cynical and accepts the new type of reality (in this case architectural) out of pure innocence and ignorance. The second is also innocent and ignorant (he comes straight from the countryside), but he is not cynical: on the contrary, he is idealistic: and he consciously wants to destroy the old to rebuild the new. Who among us resembles an American technician or a Chinese Red Guard? Nobody. Yet the apparent analogy

between the "sacrilegious relationship with the past" of the technician and that of the revolutionary also occurs in Italy: for example, in a certain drastic attitude of young people, who indiscriminately condemn "everything" that is old in the name of revolution, thus becoming bearers of a neo-capitalist value: the total replacement of the old powers by the new industrial power. Or in the cult that certain groups of young people have for collective, team work! as if it were a question of a revolutionary and popular collectivization of work, while it is precisely a request for depersonalization on the part of mass culture.

It's a knot that needs to be untied: it's a decision that needs to be made.

## «ITALIA NOSTRA» WILL GET NOTHING

In Italy there is an organization for the defense of the national artistic and landscape heritage: it is called «Italia Nostra». But I ask myself: Whose Italy is ours? «Italia Nostra» has fought some good fights: even nobly. But my friend Giorgio (Bassani) and the other friends who work and fight for «Italia Nostra» do not get offended if I present them with problems.

1) «Italia Nostra» is equivalent to «Italy of the bourgeoisie»: in this case, of a small intelligent bourgeois elite, which has been able to transform privilege into culture. But the entire Italian bourgeois subculture, there is not the slightest doubt, does not recognize Italy in "Italia Nostra".

2) The working class, now influenced not only by the old powers, but by the new transnational industrial power - which is setting aside national political powers - does not "feel" in any way the problem of the sacredness of the past. Even if they are communists, the workers have, with respect to monuments and the landscape, the same attitude as a neo-capitalist technician, who, an industrious ant, gets busy, innocent and stupid, rebuilding the world from scratch.

«Italia Nostra» will therefore never achieve anything if it does not transform its struggle into a political struggle. To do this, it must first of all distinguish itself from the remaining bourgeoisie (which has monuments and landscapes in its hands) and dispossess itself of what it has (i.e. monuments and landscapes): an unthinkable mystical act on the part of the members of the «Italia Nostra» association. Secondly, it should popularize the "problem of the past" among those who have never participated in history, except passively, as a dominated class. This operation is also almost

unthinkable: in fact, politicians (I know this from a direct source) do not take into consideration the needs of «Italia Nostra», precisely because these needs are not popular: and indeed, they would make the politician unpopular who if would take care of it.

At this point, therefore, we should take politicians by the collar and force them to deal with the "problem of beauty": at least starting by making it popular (if they are so afraid of losing votes). Taking politicians by the collar also means adopting new methods of political struggle. Those adopted spontaneously, for example, by students. But is this thinkable? The ideal of beauty that animates the members of "Italia Nostra" is truly so "politically" strong that it convinces them to take to the streets, to occupy monuments and landscapes, to fast, or to scream with the necessary violence (which leads to taking beatings from the policemen)?

But, at this point, other groups of people should intervene in support of the small group of people who desperately love the signs of the past as beauty, that is, integration of the present: a politics of alliance, in short. Would young people take to the streets in this case? It would be wonderful if a fight - "extremist", I mean - were to be ignited in defense of an old Bourbon wall, which a contemptuous landowner is about to demolish to build a residential area. But this will never happen. Because revolutionary puritanism and industrial puritanism (as I have already said here) are identical, and the love of beauty is considered a sin.

Maybe rightly so?

This, to conclude, is the fundamental problem: from Kaiseri to Arezzo the front of the destruction of the old world and the reconstruction of the new (for now horrendous) is powerful, and passes from victory to victory, from triumph to triumph. His advance is unstoppable.

Following this, men like me - owners of the past - live in a total state of frustration: never winning, and being doomed to defeat, dries up. Here is therefore the decision that must be made: either fight "really" to obtain some victory (in the mental horizon of our old culture), or accept to become complicit in what we consider "sacrilege", but which history itself is carrying out.

n. 12, March 22, 1969

## THERE ARE STILL ROMANCE LIVES

A recent investigation on the «Giorno» was dedicated to the novel. I skimmed through it quickly. I saw that my colleagues, when asked, did not spend much. Between the apocalypse and the reduction to common administration, they seemed a bit uncertain to me. The results of the investigation are therefore not very usable. The death or life of the novel, moreover, is a false problem (if approached in literary terms or in terms of off-the-cuff sociology). The novel, as Barthes understands, is beyond the sentence. The question to ask is: are fictional lives over or not over? And: if there are still fictional lives, why don't writers make more novels out of them?

There is not the slightest doubt that contemporary life still has fictional structures. In reality - that is, beyond the phrase - there is a continuous occurrence of adventures. All I have to do is look around me for a moment, and I see that the "cases" of life are all still fictional. Even the most humble reader need only think of any "real" love story: even the most flat and obvious one is a novel. Or the reader thinks of the first day a boy or girl works, hired in a factory, in a company, in an office, in a school. Isn't this a fictional event? Or the last day of work of an elderly man who is retiring. Isn't this another fictional event? In short, objectively our life is still in the grip of its pure existential nature. It's true: it tends not to be true: that is, to lose randomness; men increasingly tend to consider what happens to them as completely expected and normal; technical civilization and mass production determine millions of destinies that are all the same, and therefore devoid of that amazement of happening which is the meaning of the novel. It is still true: every pre-industrial civilization, from the first moment in which men had an associated life, has coined molds of destiny: and has regularized everything (even possible anomalies, projecting practical life into myth: alongside the physical father a mythical father, next to a physical death a mythical death, etc.). However, these molds of destiny had value within that civilization that created them through the codifications of the existing: that is, within an entropy, where everyone became the bearer of values, and as such, ended their life, good or bad. bad, like a duty to be fulfilled. But civilizations, up to now, have always been particularistic: one here and one there, one forward and one backward.

The world's infrastructure did not exist. Nations are a remnant of this type of fragmented world, in which each civilization was a concluded universe with its values evolving within it, which was itself, moreover, fragmented

and full of particularisms. It is these particularisms that, coming into contact with each other, created the historical events, that is, the novelistic. What was the descent of the Dorians into Greece if not this? Every "particularism" (national, civil, religious, ethnic, etc.) constituted the elsewhere of every other particularism. It is the feeling of elsewhere that creates the novel in reality and the novel in literature.

China, in Marco Polo's time, constituted an elsewhere, even if known only by name: and this elsewhere was a term of comparison, with respect to which even the everyday, the experienced, the boring here acquired self-knowledge and therefore amazement. If taking a trip to the unknown world of China was a cause for anxiety and exaltation etc. something of this anxiety, this exaltation, etc. it was also reproduced on a trip to Fiesole. The archetype of the modern novel is the journey; knowledge, true or ideal, of somewhere else; or the opposite (the negative) of all this: that is, the absolute trust in the values of one's own entropy (China within its wall): in this sense the novel consisted of a vertical rather than horizontal journey: in an ascent or a descent in the hierarchy of values of one's society. Either towards the Horizon or towards Power. There is no novel of the modern era in which the dominant, structural theme is not one of these two conquests.

Now it can be said that it no longer exists elsewhere (or is about to disappear completely): the world's infrastructures (airlines) have definitively and forever destroyed the Chinese walls. National and particularistic powers are on the way: industrial power is now transnational. Industrial entropy now practically includes all of humanity. We can no longer go "towards the Horizon" as if it were an adventure: that is, the conquest of elsewhere. Once the mystery of elsewhere has disappeared, the fantastic comparison with one's own values has disappeared. And, even negatively, closing oneself in one's own autarchic particularism is impossible, because, precisely, the values are no longer particularistic: for example, one certainly cannot give a "nationalism" of the entire globe. Even the (fundamentally fantastic) removal of the elsewhere is impossible, due to the non-existence of the elsewhere. We are all here.

This theoretically: for approximately three billion men all this is still in the future (even if it is felt to be imminent). About three billion people cannot take the plane, and to a lesser extent, the train or the car. For them the infrastructures are still classic and mythical: on horseback, on a donkey, on a camel or on foot.

This is why I said, in reality, objectively, the lives of the enormous majority of men are still fictional; that is, made fantastic by the presence of elsewhere, and therefore of travel, adventure, discovery, chance, cognitions, injustices, contacts, failures, happy endings. But writers belong to the elite who travel on airplanes, or who at least know that all this is about to end: and how can you pretend not to know?

I have already said several times in this column of mine that it is almost inevitable that the contents of poets must be delayed, rearguard contents. This evidently does not apply to the novel: because the sense of the novel is either there or it isn't. And if it isn't there, it cannot be hypothesized, not even out of love - perhaps eviscerated and poignant - for those who, beyond the page, live a rearguard life: fictional.

n. 13, March 29, 1969

## AN UNLOVED CHILD

Last night while half asleep, I had one of those illuminations (which in psychology are called "hypnagogic hallucinations") for which I generally then write verses: I am now translating it into prose instead. The monuments, the ancient things, made of stone or wood or other materials, the churches, the towers, the facades of the buildings, all of this, made anthropomorphic and as if deified in a unique and conscious Figure, has realized that it is no longer loved , to survive. And then he decided to kill himself: a slow and silent suicide, but unstoppable. And now everything that for centuries seemed "perennial", and in fact was so until two or three years ago, suddenly begins to crumble, at the same time. That is, as traveled by a common will, by a spirit. Venice is dying, the stones of Matera are full of mice and snakes, and are collapsing, thousands of (wonderful) farmhouses in Lombardy, Tuscany, Sicily are becoming ruins: frescoes, which seemed incorruptible until a few years ago, are starting to show incurable lesions. Things are absolute and rigorous like children and what they decide is final and irreversible. If a child feels that he is not loved and desired - he feels "extra" - he unconsciously decides to get sick and die: and this happens. This is how they are doing things from the past, stones, woods, colours. And in my dream I saw it clearly, as in a vision.

n. 14, 5 April 1969

## I DREAMED A VERSE

"Oh Merciless, I am Bus, I am Kyria." It's a verse I dreamed about last night. An old quasi-hendecasyllable (with the umlaut of him). I really don't know what this double declension of generality of mine means, evidently allusive: similar, by analogy, to Dante's "negative" declension of generality: "I am not Aeneas, I am not Paul". As if in the dream I wanted to say that I am like this and like that, that is, two important and significant characters, different from me: and I said this to such a "Merciless One", who, I know this (indeed, I knew it in the dream), it was the Man. It should be noted that: a) after many years I am writing verses regularly, so much so that I already have a possible book ready (whose at least provisional title is The first six songs of Purgatory), b) I am preparing a film, Visioni della Medea, for which I am immersed in the rereading (the reading was very recent and casual) of the Treatise on the History of Religions, a wonderful book by Eliade, c) I am still developing the screenplay, already written, for a film on Saint Paul. The other dreams I had concerned a certain town, which resembled a bit like a dark town in the Castelli Romani, a bit like Urgüp, in Anatolia: a very dangerous place in the dream, with populations, who were plain and clumsy, ready to the lynching. Urgüp is near Caesarea, north of Tarsus: Paul's places, but where, in reality, I will then shoot Medea. All this can explain, at least phonologically, «Kyria»; but «Bus»? This funny Anglesism? It is true that it resembles certain monosyllable names of Gods which are found in handfuls in Eliade; but nevertheless, I must admit, it remains substantially inexplicable (as regards the practical and cultural references with the waking world). It is also very strange (and I have not found the explanation in any psychoanalysis text) that I remain a writer of verses even in dreams. A daytime residue? Okay: but (and it often happens to me) when I think of verses in a dream, I know that they are verses, and I judge them aesthetically (generally they seem sublime, radiant to me) and their aesthetic vitality lasts until the moment of awakening (in fact this morning, waking up, I was full of ideas for verses: for example: an evening in which the horizon is of cerulean wax, according to the taste of old alliterations similar to the old umlauts that stubbornly reappeared in the dream of a humanist). But how is it possible to be a conscious doer, even if a little crazy and old-fashioned, even a little too drunk, in a world in which the principle of non-contradiction and the other Aristotelian principles do not apply? Well, there must be common ground between the dream world and the waking world, where the same principles apply and it is only the

registers that change. Let's face it, there is a Dionysian world: which cannot be clearly separated and therefore set aside. We know that there is also a ghetto of worlds and ideas. Is the Dionysian world intersubjective and relational? Yes. So why don't lay people talk about it? Why is the idiotic and hypocritical rule of the Monsignor of the House still valid, who in his Etiquette considers it inappropriate to talk about one's dreams? I never hear people talk about their dreams (I mean the average and common people, not the intellectuals: at least the ones I know). It is now scientifically proven: a) that those who do not dream become seriously ill and die, b) that those who do not remember their dreams are anomalous and therefore present a fairly serious symptom of imbalance. Should we therefore add that not talking about one's dreams is also unhygienic? (Have you ever heard a politician, who is so obviously interested in the good of his fellow men, worry about acts, gestures, actions, dreams?)

n. 15, 12 April 1969

## MEETING WITH LIVING

I ran, at eight in the evening, through that sublime city that is New York, to reach "The Academy of Music" in Brooklyn, a big old theater where there was a performance of the Living Theatre. Here is the stage at the back of the still half-empty audience, the actors of the Living: Ben Israel, Rufus, and, with his white face, his small glittering bald skull, and his hair pulled long behind his ears, Julian Beck. They meditate, provocateurs, in their aesthetic ritual which aims to become pragmatic, an initiation into a conscience based on a "reflected" idea of religion: protest and non-violence, Freud and the Indian saints. They are touching, dear, it makes me want to go up on stage and hug them. The audience gradually fills up: it's full. They are the mysterious people of New York, who have no equivalent in Italy: desperate intellectuals, with signs of attempted physical degeneration, of an ostentatious and codified protest, generous, naive, apparently without ambition, and at the same time failed and desperate, strangers to each other, to the point of cruelty of those who are unattainable and unapproachable, and at the same time lost in the need of others, towards whom they are available in an almost embarrassing way, defenseless bearers of values of extraneousness and at the same time of silence; their way of dressing has no limits, now "everything" is part of the norm (even if these days there is a

certain prevalence of "Indian" fashion, with red bandages around the head, etc.).

Be that as it may, the «recipients» of Living are an enormous number, although one cannot be more off than that, in terms of decentralization. The immense growth of the recipients has decreased the provocative power of the Living, and therefore its objective necessity and purity. Furthermore, the obligatory show in New York today is Hair (which moved to Broadway, after a long stay off, among the hippies, etc., and therefore integrated and assimilated). It's a very nice musical revue, devoid of vulgarity, with all very young actors and, as they say in the jargon, "extraordinary", etc. Truly poignant, from the black boy with the short fur jacket, to the blond boy with his hair always in his eyes, etc. Hair is a kind of New York carousel, rather folkloric, which reviews everything rebellious that happens in the city: everything with great grace, and, in the end, the death of the toy soldier in Vietnam is touching.

But did everything end like this? New York remains a sublime city, it is certain, the true navel of the world, where the world shows what it really is. However, compared to three years ago, everything seems suspended and dead. Where did Ginsberg disappear? And Bob Dylan? Is it just a question of a past trend? And where have the marches of pacifists and the kids singing on the guitar, as if this were happening for the first time in the world, anti-war songs disappeared? Where is the spectacular tragedy, experienced publicly and therefore enthralling, vital, exhilarating? Everything has ceased: the folklore remains like the stupendous scale of a snake that slipped away, underground, underground, leaving dull hair, little gangsters, crowds of desperate people to populate Nixon's America.

n. 16, 19 April 1969

## MONSTERS AND MONSTERS

In the "Lavorini affair", still not entirely clear - as I write - but which essentially presents itself "as I had foreseen", in this same column, a few weeks ago, the following points are significant:

1) The average man - that is, public opinion - represented and, I would say, officiated by newspapers, still requires, as in the depths of the millennia, the "scapegoat": that is, he feels the need for lynching. The victims to be lynched continue to be regularly sought among the "different":

we are still, in other words, in the midst of Himmlerian civilization. The camps are waiting.

2) The "different" (criminal, homosexual, poor or southern: these are the attributions of the victim to be regularly sought to be lynched) is configured as a "monster".

3) Behind the "behavior" of the accused Viareggio boys and their friends, there are three fixed points: their political choice (reactionary: monarchist party); their re-education in re-education institutions; blackmail.

The first point is irrelevant: that company from Viareggio could very well have hung out at a republican, socialist or communist meeting place for kids (pinball machines, etc.). Boys who steal, have bad friends, prostitute themselves, etc. indeed, they very often, and in an overall honest and pleasant way, have a working-class political creed.

The second point is fundamental: "re-education schools" are a real center for the spread of crime. Here crime loses its - so to speak - innocence, guiltlessness (deriving from social determination, which creates a "nature", precisely, in its own way, innocent and blameless), and acquires petty-bourgeois characteristics, because of the petty bourgeoisie it acquires, from the outside, morality. This morality does not serve regeneration at all: but becomes the "negative" ideological foundation of criminality itself.

The third point, blackmail, precisely demonstrates this. A delinquent boy who comes directly from a poor world (excluding: with its native moral and behavioral rules: especially in the Roman underclass and in the South) would never think of blackmailing. This thing comes to mind either after having been in a re-education institute or after having come into direct contact with the petty-bourgeois world. In fact, blackmail is based on petty-bourgeois terrorism: on its moralism, on its hypocrisy, on its behaviorism which has become an unbreakable norm (if not at the cost of the loss of the so-called good reputation and therefore of the place in society).

I would dare to advise the many authoritative inspectors and the many honorable inspectors, so full of humanitarian impetus, to carry out a serious statistical investigation into what I have said. I summarize the results of this statistic: blackmail is a means used by at least seventy percent of children who have been in re-education institutes; Blackmail in Northern Italy is a means used at least three or four times more than in Southern Italy.

4) The presumption that "innocence" exists (the "contrary" correlative of monstrosity). From the continuation of the investigations in Viareggio it

will emerge that such innocence does not exist, and that no one is an angel who is a victim of the devil.

5) The cowardice of the press (I cannot accuse anyone personally: first of all because I am not an accuser; and secondly because even individual journalists are victims either of their own ignorance - a minimum of reading, my God! - or of their own obligations profession: salary). However, the press contributed "massively" to creating the witch-hunt environment in Viareggio. And even the left-wing newspapers have brought grist to the mill of the horrible "committee of the fathers", for which we are indebted to a fascist Roman newspaper.

6) From all this it can be deduced that therefore the average petty-bourgeois citizen, who searches for "monsters", then regularly remains - when he doesn't have time to lynch them first - with an inch of his nose, is in reality him, the little monster. He waves, biblically, the divine curses.

n. 19, 10 May 1969

## THE GOLIARDIC HATS

Last night, on my way home, near Via Veneto, some policemen made me divert, forcing me on a long and boring tour. I asked an engine guard what was going on and he, in his poor, funny accent, happy to know, replied: "It's freshman day." In fact, a little further on, heroically enterprising with two poor and confused (foreign-looking) strollers, here is a small group of goliards, not only with their goliardic hats on their heads, but also covered in I don't know what clownish silk capes.

So, we are still at the fun hats. And the police make way for them, like when the Pope passes by.

Just a year ago I wrote a poem about students, that the mass of students, innocently, "received" as one receives a mass product: that is, alienating it from its nature, through the most elementary simplification. In fact, those verses of mine, which I had written for a magazine «for a few», «Nuovi Argomenti», had been treacherously published by a rotogravure, «L'Espresso» (I had given my consent only for some extracts): the title given from the rotogravure it wasn't mine, but it was a slogan invented by the rotogravure itself, a slogan ("I hate you, dear students") which was imprinted in the empty heads of the consuming masses as if it were something mine. I could analyze those verses one by one in their objective transformation from what they were (for «Nuovi Argomenti») and what

they have become through a mass medium («L'Espresso»). I'll just make one note regarding the passage about cops. In my poem I said, in two verses, that I sympathized with the policemen, sons of the poor, rather than with the gentlemen of the architecture faculty of Rome (in the now so distant clashes of Valle Giulia): none of the consumers realized that this did not was just a joke, a little paradoxical oratorical cunning, to draw the reader's attention, and direct it to what came next, in a dozen verses, where the policemen were seen as objects of a reverse racial hatred, as the power, as well as pointing out racial hatred to the poor - the dispossessed of the world - also has the possibility of making these poor people instruments, creating another kind of racial hatred towards them: the police barracks were therefore seen as particular "ghettos", in which the "quality of life" is unjust, even more seriously unjust than in universities. None of the consumers of that poem of mine dwelt on this: and they all dwelt on the first introductory paradox belonging to the formularies of the most obvious ars rhetoric.

I am not going to tell the reader what blackmail I was subjected to following the bad reading (reading of mass culture) of this poem of mine: even readers who had read it on «Nuovi Argomenti» would have understood it, reading it on the '"Espresso" were victims of the fatal process that I have described. I will remember Occhetto (in «Rinascita») who, in addition to limiting his criticism to those first two verses, and not to the dozen that followed (he is perhaps dealing with it now, that the police problem has exploded, and «l'Unità» publishes letters from policemen who confirm what I said!), had transformed my expression "I sympathised" with the expression, which he invented, "I cared for". And I will remember the infamous intervention by a certain Rino Meneghello in «Mondo Nuovo», who called me a coward and mentioned the death of my partisan brother, who according to his version of a misinformed moralist, had been killed by the fascists, while he had been killed by "red fascists" like him.

Now, these playful hats, an enormous mass which, as Elsa Morante later told me, who saw them from her terrace, had filled Piazza del Popolo like a horrible tide in the morning (always officially protected by the good-natured policemen). It would be easy for me to say, towards the end of the 1969 academic year, in which nothing more happened: «Here, with the right exceptions, the few thousand students of "Trento and Turin, of Pisa and Florence", of whom I was talking in my poetry, the new generation of

students and the new generation of bourgeois with whom I will have to deal, and against whom I will have to continue to fight, as with their fathers". I say this, but not to "sing victory"; I say this with an atrocious bitterness in my heart, with a discouragement that really makes me want to stop fighting, to withdraw from the fray, to have nothing more to do with this trouble, to stay alone.

## REPRESSION AND COERCION

Rereading my last piece in this column, the one concerning the "Lavorini case", and precisely the passage concerning the re-education homes, in which I said that these homes are a center for the spread of crime, I began to doubt that my words could give rise to a misunderstanding, in the sense that I wanted to accuse the re-education homes as such. I didn't want to make this accusation. The re-education homes, in themselves, are blameless: and they do what they can, good or bad according to individual cases; It depends on the directors, teachers, etc. But let's take for example the best possible directors, and the best possible teachers. Will they be able to do something against the moral "base" on which they must base their re-education? They must necessarily become "bearers of petty-bourgeois values" because "re-educating" means precisely this: bringing back to petty-bourgeois moral values those who are deviant or who have never possessed them. A director, a teacher, can add to this monstrous operation that he is forced - consciously or unconsciously - to do, his humanity, if he is a humanly rich man: and, through this mysterious (mysterious because it comes from the depths of a soul) contribution to the educational scheme, can perhaps in some cases do something for the child to be "re-educated". But in most cases, repression and coercion are much stronger than this mysterious correspondence of loving senses: and re-education ends up consisting of a wink, in which the teacher performs the metapedagogical act consisting in, from time to time, time, desperate or cunning awareness of being forced to do what he does: something which in the educated person transforms into a "sentimental education" in reverse. “Ah, is that how you want me?” he thinks, and not always unconsciously, to himself, because delinquent kids are always either very intelligent or very clever, «well, I understood everything: the world around me, the one where they want me to reintegrate, is therefore founded on these values . Therefore, I, who until

now (an innocent poor person who based my morals on other values) have not done so, if by chance I come across an adulterer, an unofficial prostitute, a homosexual etc., instead of robbing or robbing them, I will blackmail them, based on those moral values that the society, in which we live together, demands and imposes. Furthermore, it is also much less uncomfortable and dangerous for me. And then, while before I didn't lie, and I showed myself brazenly and innocently for what I was, now I know what values I have to appeal to in order to disguise myself and pretend.»

n. 20, 17 May 1969

## A BOY OF THE PEOPLE

I receive this short letter: «P.P.P., Rome. The war was won by America (sic) with excessive power, with terror, with destruction and total struggle. The resistance, reeking of every bad smell, only served to increase the suffering of the people and their fatal division for the sole advantage of communism and imperialism. Today we have returned to the exact point of fifty years ago (sic) with the disadvantage that we no longer have the fascist squads willing to sacrifice and there are no longer Hitler's powerful armies. Barabbas now reigns in Italy, shortly after Longo. Where is the light?!». (Signed: Carletto)

Dear Carletto, sorry if I underlined your spelling errors, which are not serious anyway. I didn't do it "out of malice", but only to make it clear to the reader of this column that it is a letter written by a boy from the working class, who has done his job placement at most": in short, it is not about of one of those hateful fascists, daddy's boys, who write like Delcroix. Moreover, your working-class and popular character is revealed by that final "where is the light?!", which is not an error, but a delightful dialecticism, which could not fail to move me and inspire me with sympathy for you.

You are a boy from the people, sensitive, naive: one of those who would like to "improve", move from a lower state to a higher state, identifying this higher state with petty-bourgeois culture. Easily vulnerable on this point, you believed the first ones who exercised a certain strength of conviction on you, precisely with the means and arguments of those who are typically lower-middle class: for example, "fascist, daddy's boys" peers who you perhaps admire them for their slightly superior social status, for their skilled

and exalted language, for their idealism (which, as you will one day realize, is false and degenerate).

I could talk to you at length about the misunderstandings that these apostles of «moralism as a timeless joke of power» (it is an expression of Moravia: read his entire article in «New Topics», n. 13, January-March 1969: and perhaps discuss it with your fascist friends) have created within you: the misunderstandings about the war, the resistance, the Hitlerian reality. One day you will discover with horror what happened to you in the years when you were defenseless against bad friendships... but for now I want to tell you only one thing: what is this light you are looking for? Have you ever asked yourself this "sincerely"? I am very afraid that you are looking for a light that does not exist, that is, a rhetorical light, which comes to replace a possible real light which "can only be within you". It is a bad habit of all societies and all parties to invent a false light "to shine in the future". The fascists let the light shine into the future in the homeland restored and returned to its original strength; Catholics make the light of heaven shine into the future; the liberals shine into the future the light of well-being of a new age without effort and without work (their prophet is McLuhan); the communists and socialists make "the sun - precisely - of the future" shine into the future. They are all evasive operations, which give the initiates, members, subjects, etc. etc. the illusion of a necessity and functionality of their life which are purely illusory, and therefore in reality are of no use. Because anguish, misery, anger, lack of culture, war, etc. etc. they always continue to torment men despite all their lights.

Therefore study, think, work, observe: the light is only in culture (which does not always mean the culture created at school), that is, it is only in the rational renunciation of all false consolations.

## A STUDENT FROM THE LEFT

I receive another note, the following: «Pier Paolo, you are a reactionary and conservative». (Signed: Sarino)

Dear Sarino, unlike the sender of the previous letter, you seem like a student to me, apart from the slightly rough handwriting. Maybe you are a student who has stopped studying; or a student who's a bit of an ass. A student who doesn't know many things. He doesn't know, for example, that he is a terrorist (so I also strongly recommend that you read Moravia's piece

on «New Topics», which I have already cited). I would not have responded, however, to such a peremptory message if it had not suggested a comparison with Carletto's previous note. Carletto is a fascist, but he is uncertain, humble, basically he asks me for help ("where is the light?"): you are left-wing, far-left, more left-wing than everyone, and yet you are fascist: you are fascist because you are ignorant , overbearing, incapable of following reality, slave to some principles that seem unshakably right to you and which have thus become a faith (horrific thing, when there is no charity: that is, the concrete, living and realistic relationship with history).

## A YOUNG CONFORMIST

Received a third letter. This is signed. I report some significant passages. (It is addressed not to me, but, in an unconsciously delatory way, to the authority, that is, to the editor of the newspaper, who passed it to me.) It concerns some of my poetry notes that appeared in this column, in issue no. 18 of «Tempo». Here are the passages: «... I absolutely cannot admit that the author gives the name "poetry" to those words placed next to each other without even a bit of good phonic taste... Reading this true "chaos "once again we have confirmation of what poetry is today, at least for many,: a refuge for those who want to shine in the big world without having real merit"; «But let's get closer to true hermetic poetry: hermeticism, yes, but not confusion; and from the poems of Ungaretti, Quasimodo, Montale, emanates a lyrical breath that moves and makes us understand that there is a true poet down there"; «... it is necessary to purify the world of poetry from all the smugglers and adventurers of the pen, who seek success or even (but it is horrible to think) wealth in it. I don't think Pasolini is among them but, I repeat...".

I don't want to defend those verses of mine: they are verses that will probably never appear in one of my collections (except perhaps Along the banks of the Euphrates, revised and corrected). I am interested in observing (perhaps with reference to Carletto and Sarino) the mechanism of the reaction of this third boy, Filippo. We notice in him:

a) an underlying "spiritualism", with a bad scholastic, traditionalistic, "right-wing" flavor (see the expressions: "good phonic taste" and "lyrical breath", expressions of which I hope one day Filippo will perceive the ridiculousness or at least bad quality);

b) «conservatism», i.e. defense of the goods or values received from the authority (in our case, I suppose, a miserable scholastic anthology which contains some easy poems by Ungaretti, Quasimodo, Montale). When I was a boy, boys like Filippo said about Ungaretti, Quasimodo, Montale what Filippo now says to me, with exactly the same arguments. Those who, however, were not satisfied with the scholastic anthologies that boldly reached as far as Gozzano, were champions of those poets;

c) "moralism", i.e. the abstract and exalted desire to once and for all carry out a crusade against those who disturb the normality established by authority (it is necessary to purge the world of poetry of all smugglers, etc.); What would Philip want to do with me to purge the world of me? Confine myself to the island of Ventotene?

d) «utilitarianism». This last point is the most original and interesting, because it defines the new young generation. Philip presents himself as anti-utilitarian, indeed, as fiercely idealist. Poetry, he shouts, must be disinterested! But... where does he get the suspicion that in this case my poetry is of interest? What evidence, practical or non-practical do you have? The fact is that he is not capable of thinking outside the terms of "utilitarian and non-utilitarian": the idea of utility is rooted in him and cannot be eliminated. Twenty years ago a boy "would never have thought of" making such inferences. In reality, "spiritualism", "conservatism", "moralism" are the other face of "utilitarianism" that Philip believes he does not possess: but he cannot not possess it because the whole world, in which he was born and educated, is different has no canon for judging the behavior and works of others other than the utilitarian one. He, Philip, in fact asks poetry to be confirmed and spiritualized: to be moved by a "lyrical breath" based on "good phonic taste": that is, he asks poetry to be evasive. In other words, to be useful to the authority.

Among these young people who wrote to me, Carletto the uncertain fascist, Sarino the Marxist terrorist, Filippo is perhaps the worst, because he is the average boy, who elects himself the bearer of consecrated values, believing he is carrying out a courageous act as a "crusader" while in reality performs an act of pure conformism. He's not a bad guy; and he did all this in good faith. But I fear that even if he were to repent and abandon authoritarianism for social democracy, he would never become a champion of courage. (As far as I'm concerned, then, here I simply repeat that "moralists are always badly informed": before writing that letter, Filippo

had the conventional and traditional duty to inform himself about my work: at least about my essays on Ungaretti and Montale.)

n. 22, 31 May 1969

## IMPORTANCE OF A NEW DIRECTOR

I have the joy of announcing that a new director-author has been born. Enzo Siciliano. I saw the first copy of his film The Couple, in private viewing. When the film comes out, I am sure that our Morando Morandini will say very good things about it, and with the appropriate arguments. I will limit myself to some general considerations (or predictions). This film - from a technical point of view all too confident, elegant and loose, full of muffled subtleties - fully belongs to culture: it is, in short, the film of a truly cultured man. And since the theme of the film is a cultural theme, it is treated with absolute reliability (I remember the sensational examples of unreliability of Mr. Steiner in Fellini's Dolce Vita, of the hero of Antonioni's Night and of Godard's Pierrot le fou ). This reliability is realism tout court: so everything in the film is arranged in the right way: the intellectualistic points don't make a single point, not even in the high notes, and the register makes its regular purring throughout the film without missing a beat. This certainty of the relationship with "his" reality (a cultured petty-bourgeois world, in which there is a case of "voyeurism", doubled ambiguously, and based on refined cultural documents) means that Siciliano does not feel the need to resort to external technical experimentalism, and which even re-adopts an almost Camerinian style. This will cost him a certain unpopularity among the fanatical Kascherini of «Filmcritica»: but his importance lies precisely in demystifying the falsely culturalistic, in reality amateurish fashion of post-Godardian cinema.

n. 23, 7 June 1969

## THE IDEA OF THE SCAPEGOAT

Frazer wrote his Golden Bough a few decades ago; other historians of religion, anthropologist ethnologists, in recent decades, have written a large number of beautiful works on the same topics as the Golden Bough. Yet everything they discovered and said has not yet entered the common consciousness. Even less than psychoanalysis, which, at least, everyone

(except the reporters who deal with crime news, such as the Lavorini case) knows exists.

But never in speaking, in discussing, in thinking, do people, even quite cultured ones, keep in mind, for example, that the Jews had from time immemorial the idea of the scapegoat on which to transfer the evils of society and thus erase them with his sacrifice ; or that the fate of the Madonna and that of Isis are identical; like that of Christ and that of Adonis; or that, even before the sacrifice of the goat, an infinite number of peoples used to have a banquet (sometimes orgy), which is foreshadowed in the Last Supper; or even that transubstantiation was a widespread notion among dozens and dozens of peoples, who therefore practiced the sacrament of communion; that many peoples used to crucify scapegoats, perhaps goats - or mice - etc. etc. In short, if a very refined anthropologist had wanted to syncretistically condense all the religious beliefs of peasant civilization, he could not have done better than what is told in the gospels. (This note came to mind because I am making a film on the history of religions, and not, of course, to argue once again with State Catholicism.)

## LETTER FROM CAPPADOCIA

Dear reader, I am very far from Italy (in Nevsheir, a city in Cappadocia, in central Anatolia); I haven't seen an Italian newspaper for a few days now, I don't know what the politicians in government and opposition are doing; I don't know who won the Giro d'Italia; I don't know what the latest twists and turns of the "Lavorini case" etc. are. If I said these things in my home, I would be accused of being a person "out of this world", but instead I am simply "out of Italy". Interests that seemed alive and sincere to me there have suddenly fallen away: a void has been created where before there was... chaos. It is certainly a moment of disorientation and excess distraction, but it seems to me that I am completely torn from my ground, that I have lost my roots: with the consequent pleasant sensation of floating (in the world).

Italy is therefore a great void: with its serious but obvious problems. A pile of ashes, for those who see other fires. I could very well never return: it wouldn't surprise me and it wouldn't pain me. It would leave me indifferent, because - I would think - Italy isn't there. Or, if there is, it is irrelevant and negligible. In recent days, Republic Day has also taken place in Turkey, and

in all the cities with flags, army units have paraded, speeches of love and loyalty to the nation have been given, etc. All this Turkish "reality" has the power to call into question the similar Italian "reality". If this is the Nation, it is a totality that cannot leave room for other totalities: the "feeling of the nation" cannot by its nature be objective: it is exclusive. Everything outside of it is a pure and simple unreal "elsewhere". Compared to Italy, I find myself in this "elsewhere". It feels great. I'm not anti-nationalism. I am telling or rather describing a dream.

I had to have a helicopter, for the shooting of my film. The army should have gotten it for me. Turkey is a secular republic founded on the army. But a few days ago, a law was about to be passed in the Senate, which had already been passed in Parliament, by which the civil rights of certain political prisoners would be restored. But the army threatened reprisals if this law was passed: thus a crisis arose, which was then resolved by postponing the vote on the law until after the elections, which are not far away. However, political tension continues. Steps for the helicopter: I will get, badly, the same effect with the zoom, from the top of some tower - more climbing, less climbing... -. What is curious about this army affair is that it seems that it was not the highest hierarchies who were stubborn and threatening, but the middle ones, that is, the colonels.

Jumping from Turkish to Italian nationalism, even in Italy, before I left, there was a lot of talk about a military coup. It is true that in our country we spoke of "generals": but perhaps it was force of habit. In reality, it seems to me that it is the middle hierarchies of the armies that are restless. Violence is always a sign of weakness or uncertainty. It means that in Turkey, Italy, Argentina, Greece etc. the colonels feel weak and uncertain (at least, or partly, unconsciously), and therefore tend towards violence. Generally we are weak and uncertain when we have lost something: material, but also non-material. The loss is disorientating.

## A WORLD IN DESTRUCTION

In Nevsheir the mechanism of my thoughts, in my "relationship with reality" - even that without the fortune of being Turkish - is the same as always. I don't need Italy to think.

I'm not engaging in old anti-nationalism, I repeat. Anti-nationalism envisaged a nation, in order to deny it. In reality, I am relatively interested

in denying Italy (it is an interest that has survived or, rather, is delayed). In fact, now that Italy (as in a dream) is physically denied to me, the problems that concern me are the same: it is a pure coincidence that, in this case, they are a Turkish variant of Italian problems. They are the problems of the modern world, which, for example, is replacing the previous world by destroying it. Seeing the old cave villages of Cappadocia destroyed and seeing the Sassi of Matera destroyed gives me the same pain.

## DISGUISED AS «POOR»

The day before last night, around half past ten, I left the small tourist hotel in Urgüp (only yesterday I moved to the similar hotel, just built and smelling of paint, in Nevsheir), attracted by strange phenomena that were happening in the void. of the night (the night, from Cassino downwards, is still the ancient night, with its natural curfew and its natural old sacred fear): these phenomena consisted of echoes of voices in chorus, some isolated outbursts of clapping, and in a dry brightness of electric light in a point surrounded by darkness. All this happened not far from the hotel.

From a gate, as I approached, I glimpsed a white staircase, like those in stadiums, full of people dressed in dark. It was an open-air theater. There was no ticket fee. I entered and sat down next to the last spectators in the small amphitheater. On the bare stone stage, with a bare metal microphone in the middle, and only two or three symbolic and indicative elements of scenography: a brick wall and two poorly painted windows - essentiality due not to intellectualism but to sincere and ancient poverty - of boys, evidently students, were performing a kind of village vaudeville. They had disguised themselves as "poor people": it goes without saying, it took a lot of cheekiness, because in these places everyone is actually dressed as poor people. Were they nice? or were they a little unpleasant? But yes, they were nice, future faithful citizens of the Republic, upright and integrated, with nothing more in their hearts than judicious servility in the face of the blackmail of power which presents life as a lemma, as absoluteness.

After a while another boy, proud of the organizer's rosette on his chest, came to bring me a chair, so that I could be more comfortable: with the grace and respect of ancient hospitality, and no servility. Even the mayor of Urgüp and the director of the school then came to greet me, also with that ancient, non-servile grace. All this necessarily made me feel like I was part

of the world of authority. There's no doubt, I'm here, a director, with a (calligraphic, after all, and much less beautiful than I expected). There in the great and aestheticizing Magyar plain, the representatives of Power, officers, ministers or whatever, arrive near the prison for the "different", galloping on horses full of overflowing vitality. Their appearance took my breath away. Was it the emotion of the victim at the sight of her executioners, so wonderfully lucky and intact? The heart sinking of those who must die, in the face of those who have the power to cause death? The fact is that in the fable, they appeared as fabulous beings, beings who never had doubts, and, accepting life as it is, did not suffer racial degradation; they remained natural men in all their power. That's not always true, as the crew says, with Callas etc. etc. I am a man of power, objectively I am. I try to be as democratic as possible, which makes the situation worse... I look at the mayor of Urgüp, he who actually represents power (in a nationalist and militarist state) and who is nevertheless in possession of effective humility. Who knows what is in the heads of those who believe in power (i.e. in order and its mandatory rules) and who are part of it. There is no doubt that life must present itself to them as a wonderful, exhilarating, glorious, sacred and mythical whole. This is the second time in a short time that my thoughts have revolved around this issue. It also happened to me a few days ago in Rome while watching a film by Miklós Janksó, The Damned by Sandorleader of «black power», Newton, that «the body is black» (for the guilty conscience of the complexed and puritan whites who have the power) : it is also true that for blacks and other degraded people, the body, that is, the sex, is white. And it is a wonderful, unattainable, right, poignant whiteness.

n. 25, 21 June 1969

## A FATAL WAY OF BEING

After more than a week, I received some Italian newspapers; I took them, I looked at them, and in an uncontainable impulse, made of pain, humiliation and anger, I threw them in the bin of the small tourist hotel in Nevsheir.

Why? For all the old reasons. It was a bad joke, the "feeling" of which gradually formed what is called the experience.

There are some happy old men: I will be one of them. For now this bad joke still makes me feel pain as if I were a boy. I once again consider

looking for another nationality, which will "free" me from this all in all impure and unjustified pain. If I no longer believe in the possibility of both personal and collective interventions (parties, movements) to do something against that fatal Something which is the way of being of a nation (ignorant, provincial, vulgar, reductive, old, terrorist, unjust ), however, I am not wise enough to adapt to this idea. On the other hand, one is never wise in situations where self-love is at stake. Italian newspapers offend my self-esteem.

So far from everything (by chance, as one dies) I feel how bad I am a servant of that truth which does not have and should not have a shred of mercy.

## A REVOLT KILLED BY PRIDE

In Nevsheir, after the actual prehistory, there was a second prehistory, which was then a centuries-old wait of Western reason. I try to describe the valley at the bottom of which a child shouted what I will say later... But first I must observe how good will was immediately put in place here - the same as in previous centuries - used in regional and religious history - to try to encounter - as Jung says - "as little as possible in processes and experienced facts that do not correspond to our rational expectation". Consequently, here are electric lights, asphalt, small square houses, concrete, etc. etc. And come on, let's get on with the business. What a wonderful event, however, the discovery - so recent - of what Jung calls "a rationally oriented consciousness".

Well, here we are at the valley. Just outside Nevsheir - where a bus of old French and American women arrives every day - the pink and an enchanted ocher - that of the old wineskins - a little opaque and dull, too - and the prosaic yellow that gives on to brown, but at the same time the crazy yellow with sulfur - they landed on erosions... But I don't want to start making artistic prose. The fact is that throughout the region there are valleys so crazy that they are too easily describable, with: poetic plots (terraces, squares, etc.) of wheat, which from above seem painted and corroded by time; poetic little fields of onions - in thin thin rows; poetic vineyards no bigger than heads of cauliflower, countable one by one, lined up on trapezoids of white clay (stuck between a wall of spires, crowds of

pyramids, walls). There is no shortage of fruit trees: which arise - so pure and perfect that they bring tears to your eyes - there in the middle - wherever it happens. They are alone with their little shadow. Green with a mineral darkness, whether apple or cherry trees - which are few - while almond and pistachio trees abound, and certain olive trees (if they are olive trees) with thorns. Often these little trees are in a row, against a small terrace overlooking the Thebaid, so united with the weak sun shining down: a green of almond tree, a green of an apple tree, with the grey-green tufts (like petrified smoke) of the olive trees: and, to the right and to the left , the pink of the cones - pink which in turn are revealed, in their hundreds, on ivory-white jewelery - furiously pleated with another pink, softer and more mysterious, on the side of a flat mountain.

Lonely donkeys (wearing the large rounded saddle of white sheepskin) frequent those valleys; it's their season and they don't hide it - but, dissociated, they continue to deal with food, with their long heads full of their difficult and not very effable wisdom.

So, the child at the bottom of the valley, here's what he was shouting to us: "We boom boom against Americans" - story-telling, although story-telling has never been so acute: but the valley took care of it, so poetic and sacred (humble) to give it back its intimacy raving about it that was lost due to the necessarily shouted communication: and it was actually a monologue, because we were shadows seen from down there in a cutting light, an hour before sunset. Furthermore, he too, the child, was a shadow, seen by us, on the riverbank, among the irregular rows of large poplar trees (struck by the same cutting light): an energetic shadow that followed the shadow of two donkeys who were going, going with their load of bundled up mothers. He continued for a long time with his "bum-bum", with his "goodbye Messiers" and again "bum-bum against Americans". Then he disappeared, calmed down, towards the little gardens at the bottom of the pink valley.

What do the "colonels" - no longer indispensable - say about it in the capital? They will perhaps make wills, perhaps, before the last attempt. Contradictory wills, of course. Where the "anti-American sentiment is American, as it is anti-communist", as they would say in a left-wing newspaper. But in Uchisar, Avcilar, Ortohisar, Urgüp, next to the feeling of the Turkish nation which makes those who are not lucky enough to be Turkish into irrelevant beings and, poor thing, incapable of totally experiencing reality - there is added a feeling, a little feeling, a little ', how

to say?, rascal: tourism? the dollar? Ah, powerful force of snobbery, the only force in the world that can create something from nothing. It created in its time (like the others) the Turkish Nation, it now creates a country that is positioned in the dollar area, at the very moment (we would say in our left-wing newspaper) in which with cognitive lightness the zeal shouts in a decade the protest against the dollar. The anguish of snobbery gives Turks frustrated faces in front of a tap that doesn't work - but its joys fill them with pride, together with: a) in front of a (very poor) army unit parading under the red national flags; b) in front of a tap that works like in Europe.

Bottom line: a lot of prosaicness awaits us in the years to come.

## A PROCESSION ADVANCES: IT'S THE CALLAS

At the bottom of one of these valleys - on the riverbed - there is wheat around - and rows of poplars and thorny olive trees, silvery against the pink of the hundreds of spires - it walks towards me and imprints itself violently on my retina, a absurd little crowd.

The light - it's true - is that of dreams: the last light of the sun at the edge of the horizon. In two or three minutes the sun will have disappeared, and it will be grey, the divine gloom suffused with pink. But now the blond light passes over the grass, the riverbed, the wheat and is reflected, blindingly, against the backdrop of the Thebaid. Thus, what happens in this light is already in itself not very credible.

The advancing crowd is made up of Italians, Turks: those who work and those who are simply curious, and proceed on the margins, illegally, ready to escape. The clothing is the most colorful and discordant. There is maximum freedom in dressing in this international crowd. There are not even a hundred people, of whom only about thirty are advancing on the riverbed, while the others are dispersed throughout the valley - on the high edges, on the terraces, among the thick plants.

Against the sunset sky, with white banners of clouds, without even a bit of red, on a bank at the bottom of the riverbed, the black figures of the technicians are looming around a film camera: they are not one of ours, but of some television - who tinker as one does on special occasions.

Down here on the riverbed, etching themselves into my retina, in front of everyone, there are some Turkish workers, pushing a black and gray "V" shaped cart: and around them those who have other tasks attached to the

cart. All animated by great good will. Behind, here is a group scattered and composed in a coruscating but clear disorder of a Flemish painter. In the center there is a female figure. She is covered up to breast height by a white veil, behind which her face and long hair can just be glimpsed. From under this white veil, hangs a bunch of golden necklaces, very large, which make an opaque sound, like the bells of the herds: these necklaces dangle on a blue "patience" lined with silver - it seems very old, of those preserved in the museum display cases, which, if you touch them, you would think would go to dust. Under the patience falls a large black skirt: which is supported by the edges by two or three people, careful to keep it high above the knee of the woman wearing it. She thus proceeds like an unseen queen. Behind her comes another small group of her entourage: and among this, the faithful waitress, dressed in red and green, holding the two magical little dogs by the leash, as innocent as two insects, two little butterflies at their first flutter here and there. , and at the same time decrepit, with the wisdom of peasant kings. And behind them, with the tools of their techniques in hand, all the others, who don't know how much that dying light of the sun...

n. 26, 28 June 1969

## THE RIGHTS OF LIFE

In this sinister calm, life seems to be regaining its rights. There is sun, summer, Sundays in the open air. (Today, walking with Ninetto along the banks of Trasimeno, trying to get closer to the lake through the cultivated fields, I came across some apple trees, abandoned to their fate, because they evidently no longer provide any profit. Who could have ever kept Ninetto from pick some of those apples? And I too gave in to the temptation. They were wonderful apples, of inexpressible goodness. Under that washed-out summer sky, in the ambiguous peace of the countryside, I tasted the ambrosia, sun and rain mixed together. It was so much so that I didn't feel such acute physical pleasure.) Are the rights of life the anonymous acts of "everyday religion", which are repeated stupendously the same and which produce nothing except their ephemeral, sometimes happy meaning? And that being such they do not lead forward, but backward, and are, therefore, in conclusion, acts of the desire for death?

We haven't moved forward for a year. The river of history that carries us all indiscriminately (because the illusion of the progression of time is common to all equally) stagnates. Then we give in to inertia, we put aside

our weapons, physical or ideal, we abandon ourselves to the graceful acts of life. And he who has fought more badly, spends the days of peace more badly. This is how we humans are made, poor beasts.

## IT'S ALL OUTDOORS

I read by chance a little review of a new book by Montale (Fuori di casa). I note that: a) it is no longer of any interest that the landscape of Montale is the "Ligurian" landscape, put in quotation marks, because the Ligurian landscape is now completely deconsecrated, has lost its provincial mystery, is res communis omnium: b ) there is no longer any place for particularistic landscapes in a world that is no longer particularistic, aligned on a single international landscape front.

Therefore the title of Montale's book is also a little heartbreaking. Out of the house? But does a house still exist as a relevant fact, as a real place? The walls of the houses have fallen! Everything is outdoors, without intimacy. Ask the new kids, who are looking for their places outside. Even I, who am not a boy, although I love the tranquility of a possibly large and beautiful house to work in, feel that the poetry of the house is no longer there, that it is actually ridiculous and painful. The need for restraint, privacy, discretion, protection that the nineteenth-century house gave is no longer a need, but the survival of a need, given that, among other things, this need has always been a privilege. The living room, the little garden... This atrocious illness of the Italian man of letters... which then made him accept fascism... as xenophobia, xenophobia, norms, forced industriousness, respectability (of course I'm not talking about Montale). .. now you can no longer separate the idea of a book from the smile of a lady with a glass sweetly in her hand...

I am thinking, in this case, of the Strega Prize - awarded in recent days - the triumph of the atrocious union between the respectable man of letters and the respectable lady, in the polite living room... (However, I would like to recommend to the reader the book by Fulvio Tomizza, which I think has this year I competed for the prize. It is a book of great literary value, truly "written", as now rarely happens. There is also a "landscape" there, the Istrian landscape; but since this landscape is no man's land, nor Italian nor Slavic, here it loses its provincial tranquility, and becomes dramatized. It is not a unique and absolute, but one of many and ambiguous. And then there

is little irony and little humor in the relationship with it. Everything is taken very seriously. Hence the mythical tension of his extraordinary literary writing.)

n. 29, 19 July 1969

## A GREAT HISTORICAL FACT

Can a man place himself outside of his history (even if he knows that this history is an illusion of human optics, and has made it become the place of his conscience, with all the duties that this operation implies)? No, he can't. This exit from history, adopting a false and lying perspective of posterity or cherubism, is an act dear to the reactionaries, and the right-wing newspapers are full of writers who lend themselves to similar ascetics, aimed at satisfying the spiritualistic need of the petty bourgeois (who , even if unconsciously, they are the nefarious "materialists", the object of their hatred).

Therefore, if a man cannot escape from the historical circle in which he is stuck, with all his conscience, he cannot judge the historical events of his era sub specie aeternitatis. If he does that he is a hypocrite.

Man reaching the moon and walking on it is undoubtedly a great historical fact. How come it doesn't really interest almost anyone? Why has he become an almost external object of simple curiosity and the need to be equal with information? These days I'm working on a film: I'm therefore not alone: I spend the whole day with at least sixty people who work with me, close to me all day: also, working outdoors (these days, in Grado) I see dozens and dozens of other people, extras, onlookers, guards, police, owners of the places where I go, friends who happen to visit me, etc. etc. In short, I live in the square for at least fourteen hours at a time. Well, in all these days, no one has ever talked about conquering the moon: and when I say never, I mean literally never. I myself often forget to buy newspapers in the morning, and, as far as the moon is concerned, I only read the big annoying headlines. The press itself seems to me to be engaged in an emphatic undertaking. In fact, it inflates events, as if out of a duty, an a priori deliberation: going to the moon is huge, so let's make huge headlines and articles. Yet we feel that there is no demand for this enormity.

Go and see if the titles of the AC Milan-Manchester football match and the accompanying spreads were unrequested! Of course it is unfair that the

Milan-Manchester match arouses greater real interest than the conquest of the moon: that it stirs feelings in a more real way. But it's a fact.

Why do men (at least in Italy) - including myself, for that matter - feel this resistance to allowing themselves to be implicated sentimentally, and therefore with the passion that creates identifications, by the Apollo feat?

As for me, I know some reasons: to begin with, the name "Apollo" annoys me, a ridiculous and rhetorical humanistic residue - heavily hypocritical - acting as a "sign" for an object produced by the most advanced technological civilization; I feel a strange dislike for the three astronauts, types of average and perfect men, examples of how one should be, unaesthetic but functional, devoid of imagination and passion, but ruthlessly practical and obedient - absolutely devoid of any critical and self-critical ability, real men of power; I feel an unpleasant repulsion for the lower-middle-class background of these three men, those blond children, so cute and already so marked by their completely conditioned future, those three wives who play with such shameless candor the role that is asked of them: Penelopi, yes , faithful and a little abrupt Penelopes, who know how to reduce everything, at the right moment, to coffee and canapés to offer (with the indifferent and reassuring hope in their hearts that their man will return and stop being a hero) to their neighbors home; I also hate all the American officialdom that surrounds the company, with that Agnew in mind... All these are my own idiosyncrasies, of an eternally discontented intellectual, spoiled by a good taste that no longer makes sense, embittered of his unrealized political illusions?

I don't believe it. What is conscious in me operates at a semi-conscious or completely unconscious level, even in the mass of Italian citizens. (But in Tanzania, for example, a typical Third World country, the newspapers dedicate a few lines to space enterprises, while they put on the front page, in large letters, the news concerning their very immature and particularistic national life.) What makes resistant to loving the lunar undertaking is that it is an undertaking of Power. And I don't just mean the capitalist Power, but also the Soviet Power. The spectacular exploits of Power tend to reduce us to an infantile state. Power carries out (financing them) the greatest feats, and we are all there with our mouths open to admire. It is clear that we do not want to become children again, that we do not want to be eternally reduced to the state of children. Therefore we also detest all the disguises of the most ferocious paternalism in history (because undoubtedly the most

powerful): false democracy, populist demagogy, family sentimentalism, the frightening rhetoric of obedience.

## AFTER THE CONQUEST OF THE MOON

I have to add one more observation. Let's pretend to have lived in the years of the enterprise that all the newspapers these days remember: Columbus's journey to the Indies and his landing in America. It is a fiction, which I propose, which implies hypothetically judging that event with our mentality - at least liberal and enlightened - or at least equipped with that humor that was the privilege of the elites - or of poets, such as Cervantes or Ariosto.

Columbus's undertaking, which later became an undertaking of humanity, was, at that time, an undertaking of the Spanish monarchy: that is, it was financed by Power. Therefore, Columbus' great "human" undertaking was, in the historical moment in which it took place, nothing more than the "start" to a series of atrocious colonialist undertakings. But while, in the case of Columbus, there is evidently a dissociation between the single man, or hero, Columbus, and the financing Power - a dissociation that doubles the brute fact: on the one hand the great human enterprise, on the other the ferocious commercial and colonial enterprise - in the case of astronauts, this dissociation does not exist. The hero of this undertaking is not the astronaut - who is essentially a simple robot - but the technique (I'm not saying Von Braun, but the technique). There is no longer any dissociation, therefore, because technology is not the modern personification of Columbus, who takes advantage of the financing of Power, to make his discovery, almost on a meta-historical level, but it is the very operational and pragmatic aspect of Candies.

Therefore, the conquest of the moon is not a human undertaking that will ultimately override and overcome the historical and particularistic power that financed it: but it will be a permanent and inseparable fact of Power. Therefore, what will happen following the conquest of the moon is foreign to us, because the operation of Power is foreign to us, with its military and economic purposes that involve us passively, and therefore with violence.

## A WORD TO REVALUATE

And there is one last observation to make - and the reader will forgive me if I insist on a topic which I say is not interesting - when, in reality, I mean that your interest is different from what the press would have us believe ( that is, a huge television carousel advertising the average American lifestyle and military spending). I have attempted several times in this column to re-evaluate the word "humanity" - which expired during twenty years of just but moralistic Marxist polemic against humanitarianism. It is clear that from now on history will no longer be the history of nations, that is, of national powers: but it will be the history of all humanity, unified and standardized by industrial and technological civilization - just to put it with the utmost simplicity. Power tends from national to become transnational: remaining power. That is, in this case, making him conquer the moon. The conquest of the moon is therefore already statistically (as well as with the hindsight of fake posterity) an undertaking of humanity: but for it to truly become such, this humanity must be free. I speak as a utopian, I know. But either be utopians or disappear.

## A FAULT OF THE OLD PEOPLE

Once you reach a certain age, as they say in respectable discussions, you become a humorist, inevitably. It is a grave fault of the old. Young people - those who count or will count - never use humour. They take everything head on and seriously. Humor implies a somewhat ascetic distrust of human operations: or at least a detachment from it, due to the aftermath of disappointments. It allows you to live again: to go on just to finish your life. It is not uncommon for this humor, which is forcibly acquired as one grows older, to have another face, utopia; which is therefore the fossilization of youthful hope and seriousness.

n. 32, 9 August 1969

## EMPTY THE SEA

Of Tirrenia, I can say that it is the true face of Italy. I saw in the equatorial chaos, among three thousand people all together and all the same - among much beauty - even a small, negligible gesture. A hand picking up a copy of «Illustrated Time» from a newsstand. Along the seafront, I repeat, in front and behind, seen all together, at least three thousand people swarmed, with their seaside colors, imposed by a graceful fashion, there is no doubt. Among these and of these is my average reader, my recipient. I

felt guilty like few times in my life; I found myself intent on emptying the sea: a distracted, ferocious, even stupid, and also graceful sea, but, in any case, fully entitled to be what it is. And therefore to exclude from itself what does not resemble it, according to the law of an immeasurable force. There is no longer a proportion between minority and majority. The moment minorities become aware of their rights, at least nominally, once again history sneaks up and disappoints, confronting us with this unexpected enormity.

Even the majority - and it not in words, but, on the contrary, in deeds, and in silence - seems to have become aware of itself, as such: beyond nations and beyond parties. The mathematical order of technology (the fussy and meticulous conquest of the Moon) is flanked, as its other face, by magma: impenetrable, incalculable except in statistics and market research, unattainable.

## THE BRIDGE OF '43

Oh yes, this bridge... I pass over it while running: I realize that it is the "famous" bridge only after I have passed it. This leaves me so indifferent that I almost shrug my shoulders, overcome by a sort of intoxication of indifference.

It is a bridge just before Livorno coming from Pisa.

It is September 9 or 10, 1943.

There I was: at the bottom of the escarpment, dressed as a soldier. Around me is my company or the entire regiment (I don't remember, I don't remember).

We are lying among the bushes, on the banks of I don't know what river or canal (like in dreams). I see others around me, who have become incomprehensible effigies of themselves.

I can't imagine what happens to them: what feelings will they feel in this moment? It's time for great confessions or great distance. But no one has time to confess; or the opportunity is missing.

I'm terrified, literally. I'm afraid of death. A fear that tightens my insides so much that I don't know how I can hide it. So, I imagine, I too am a sphinx without feelings in front of others. So much so that I lie down peacefully in the shade of the bush where fate has stuck me, and take a nap.

Along the coast (with the colors of the last still hot summer) mortar shots can be heard regularly.

We too are armed (armed? the usual rifle and a hand grenade): and the order is to fight. Against who? The Germans of course. But we're not so sure.

The three or four officers who are close to us - and who until the day before had pompously taught us that shortly before the attack we must shout "Savoy!" (sic) - now they have lowered their wings, and are visibly more afraid of us.

Hours pass.

Two German tanks arrive, they come down among us among the bushes, from the embankment; a certain confusion arises, and after a while we realize that we have given up. The officers order us to hand over our weapons to the five or six German soldiers on the tanks.

In line we go to hand over our weapons.

My friend Castiglioni (who attended the Liceo Galvani in Bologna with me), looked at by me, looks at me. I'll look at it again; he looks back at me.

At the time I was physically very strong, but I was a delicate hermetic poet in the Friulian language; he wasn't even strong. He was a frail and defenseless boy from a good family. I repeat, we look at each other, two weak and anti-militarist intellectuals, who in those few days of military service had done everything that anti-militarists, polemical and idealists do, we see the same thought in each other's eyes.

Oh no, not even an idea! Surrender your weapons? To these four grinning Germans? Impossible. We disobey.

Secretly we hide in the bushes and hide the rifle. As for the hand grenade, we throw it into a ditch.

Then they line us up and push us like a herd of sheep, with the officers of the «Savoy!» disarmed and mixed among the troops, towards Livorno.

Castiglioni and I continue to look unconvincingly into each other's eyes. Here's a shootout. Another moment of unspeakable apprehension. We throw ourselves into a ditch at the side of the road. When the shooting stops, and the others get up to continue along the road, Castiglioni, I and two or three others remain hidden in the ditch. The regiment is already there, a grey-green herd. I never knew what his fate was.

We get up from the ditch and take the opposite road, through the countryside north of Livorno. The grapes are ripe, the sun is high, the cicadas are singing.

n. 33, 16 August 1969

# LIBERTY IN BORGHESE

It is a little story, with its narrative time and its ending, which I tell here. The life of the rich - I mean those who own billions in furniture and real estate, and many of them, so that those who own a few are, compared to them, almost poor - is unrepresentable for a modern poet.

Strange, I wrote «poet» thinking about cinema.

Making a film, then, let's put it better, about "real billionaires" is theoretically impossible (as for a poet in language I think of Proust, and I leave the matter suspended; but not without asking a question: would a Proust be possible without rich humanists, for as to the extreme frontier of humanism?).

The Art Nouveau or neoclassical villas - the small ones, decidedly delightful - and the large ones (with a minimum price, in fact, of one billion), do not have a "reality" to photograph: they inevitably fade into the generic, the already seen, the average. Even a row of "boats" in a roadstead, in a small gulf (we are in Cap Ferrat) can only be represented in shots that are in themselves ugly. I mean that the director-poet could not count on an objectively "already beautiful" "reality", something on which he can certainly still count if he wants to represent a life of the "poor": peasant or urban.

Of motorboats or three masts in a row, even the richest, the most precious, are trivial, in themselves. And they make the surrounding landscape banal. Yes, Cap Ferrat is banal.

But this has nothing to do with the "morality" that I want to describe in a few words.

There are two times for this morality. First half: I find myself (absent like an alloglot ghost) in one of those "decidedly delightful" small villas, which recall the American eighteenth century. It's night; I only see the white neoclassical facade in the darkness.

In front, a swimming pool shines, preciously and slightly turquoise, also small, like the facade; and the darkness around. Therefore, as if abstracted from the space, between the white of the facade and the blue of the swimming pool, human figures move, in an almost sacred silence: about twenty human figures, no more: in addition to a greyhound and a Spanish guitarist.

They say the usual things, with the usual glass of whiskey in hand (the shots are, indeed, "banal"), but the voices are lost in the silence like an

unintelligible and therefore poetic whisper. Beyond the small pool there is a bed; C. is lying on the bed, and I, angular, on the edge; after a while the guest of honor arrives (for whom the party is being held in that villa emerging from the darkness), Mrs. Johnson. She sits down, or rather lies down (dressed in trousers, elegant, petite, bitter, kind) and she chats a bit with C.

Here, more or less, that's all the first half.

Second half; my room in the hotel in the center of Monte Carlo. It's warm, but a storm is brewing; I'm not sleepy because curiously I slept before dinner; so I read: a few pages of the Marchesino painter by De Pisis; and then a magazine, which with the «Futuribili» and the «Antologia Vieusseux» I took with me on my trip. It's called «La Comune», it's the first issue. I read the editorial and a debate on Asfissiante cultura by Dubuffet: the debaters are young people, even if not boys (their names are Prattico, Di Genova, Ballerini, Spatola, Natale, Lunetta). How to say? Or rather, how to testify to it? I don't feel antipathy or anger towards these kids, although their speeches are made to arouse, in a hundred ways, antipathy or anger. One feels that they are slaves to a game, and, in this case, automatons of a terminology. They don't realize it: they are "without suspicion". They have no inkling of the ridiculous self-importance with which they repeat clichéd phrases, all speaking with the same slang words (shamelessly bringing back the word "system", which is now truly unseemly to use): they split hairs like theologians, like mandarins or like savages: they base their arguments on a "sophy", which being neither philosophy nor science, constitutes a completely arbitrary common ground (and implying the usual immediate pragmatic goal, the usual terrorism, for which they are afraid of each other; a terrible fear); woe to let slip a word outside the jargon, woe to discover the side covered by revolutionary cynicism! But it is such naivety - almost indecent - that it does not make me take an enemy position towards them (they will patiently laugh at my patience).

But it is not to say these things that I speak of them. I talk about them because never, as on that late August 15th evening in Monte Carlo, have I understood what the lower middle class is. The words of those boys "smelled" (unfortunately the exact word) of the lower middle class: you could literally feel the poor or barely decent economic situation in them; things with a hint of cooking and twentieth-century furniture, or old provincial furniture - and all the other things... The touchstone on which all

this is highlighted, in a kind of exaltation, is Mrs. Johnson. That is, outside of personal references (because, I must say, the lady seemed sweet and intelligent to me - I can't believe that, as they say, it was she who advised Johnson to retire) something absolutely "negative". These are the irreducible contradictions, the ones that do not console (with their easy dialectical solution).

The bullicame of the lower middle class fills the world: snobbery, moralism, neurosis agitate it as if in an enormous snake pit. Whoever is inside doesn't notice; and few of those inside can or know how to get out, at least for a few moments. How I bless my traditional and unorthodox love for the people (which has never been a workerist myth), through which I have lived and live outside the hell to which I was destined by birth, wealth and culture!

n. 36, 6 September 1969

## QUOTING BRECHT

Brecht says: "Many of those who are persecuted lose the ability to recognize their own defects." This may be my case. But, if I were to admit it, I would have to prove, first, that I am persecuted. I am. I would only change my mind if a piece of printed paper was put before my eyes in which people talk about me, not with benevolence, but at least with the objectivity with which they talk about my other colleagues. What I say is mean. But I'm not complaining. I, alone as I am, outside of every code, not to mention every law, claim the right to absolute independence of thought and speech: it is therefore right that I pay for it. Precisely with a form of persecution (never-ending trials, at best, an "Italian-style persecution" in newspapers and on television, at worst). If therefore, objectively, I am the object of a certain persecution, I could be one of those mentioned by Brecht. But I don't think I've completely lost the ability to recognize my flaws. At this moment I am petty, or I give in to those who drag me onto the terrain of pettiness.

n. 37, 13 September 1969

## A SOUL FULL OF GRACE

*Garofana, 22 August 1969*

Dear Paolo, I think you remember me even though many years have passed since the last time we met. I'm Straccaletta and I think now you remember, I've been in prison since 1964 and I still have another 22 months and let's hope they pass soon. I came across the magazine «Tempo» and so I had the opportunity to read your article, Il chaos, and I tell you frankly I found it very truthful. On the other hand, you have always been of the idea of saying and doing what you think and this is an advantage, and this is demonstrated by the success you have achieved, both as a director and as a writer. Sorry I didn't ask about you sooner, how are you? Despite the place where I am, I enjoy excellent health and I hope you do the same. Now, dear Paolo, I'll stop bothering you. Of course, please accept my best wishes in your response. I greet you dearly, your friend

*P.E.*

Dear Straccaletta, I know five or six of «straccaletta», but, reconstructing your character from the letter, I identified you among the homonyms. I have been receiving letters from various prisons scattered here and there across Italy for some time. Is this a warning sign? I have another trial soon... it would be nice if we met for air. You see? You're making me take it as a joke. But your letter is made to give joy and confidence. If you've been there for many years, it means you've done it quite badly: yet your soul is full of grace. I hope that the next few months pass quickly, and as soon as you are released, write to me again, so that we can have a party. (You will think I'm exaggerating. But you see, I receive dozens and dozens of letters a week, and the person who writes to me always asks me for something, or demands something, maybe just to be taken into consideration. You, on the other hand, don't ask me for anything, you just give me What prompted you to write to me was just a moment of joy, and I must tell you, this joy that wants nothing is everything for me.)

n. 38, 20 September 1969

## DEAR PIER PAOLO,

regarding my article on Fellini's Satyricon, you accused me of having made a substantial error by talking about the film without understanding what the characters were saying. In reality, the film I saw was not silent and I understood what the characters were saying because they spoke in languages I know. Rather, we should agree on the meaning of the word

"audiovisual". Theater is also audiovisual. The spectator, in the theatre, watches and listens. But the theatrical text can be read without the performance because it has a literary or aesthetic value. This cannot be said of screenplays except in very rare cases.

*It is clear that we watch and listen at the cinema as in reality. It is also evident that the word makes the image more "complete". But I'm not as sure that it makes her "different" as you pretend to believe. And this, precisely, because the word in the cinema does not have an expressive, i.e. aesthetic, function but an informative one. On the other hand, you say that «cinema on a linguistic level is audiovisual: in that the code of interpretation of reality (which is precisely audiovisual) and the code of interpretation of cinema largely coincide». Now I think that cinema should be decoded only on an aesthetic level. At that level the word in cinema either counts for little or doesn't count for anything. And in fact you admit that on an aesthetic level you can also create silent masterpieces. But what does this mean if not that the code of interpretation of reality and the code of interpretation of cinema do not coincide?*

*Of course the word is sound. And here we agree. Cinema is image and sound. A Japanese film spoken in Japanese (i.e. in a language I don't know) seems to me more real, more plastic, more complete and in short more Japanese than the same Japanese film spoken in Swedish (another language I don't understand). And this is because the Japanese language as "sound" makes Japanese interiors, characters and events more complete and more Japanese. This is why I am against dubbing in a language other than the original one.*

*That said, I don't really pretend to be right. I would just like you to make the necessary distinctions between the word that expresses and the word that informs. Between the linguistic level and the aesthetic level. Between reality and representation. The word in the cinema could very well, it is true, be equally and even more expressive than the image. But then it would be a duplicate of the image.*

*Friendly yours*

*Alberto Moravia*

## CARO ALBERTO,

it seems to me, to tell you the truth, that instead of responding to my notes, you wanted to do nothing but reiterate, in your note, your previous

opinions. We are stubborn, and that's okay; if this were not the case we wouldn't even have our own exclusive system which is always closed by barriers, ditches, and perhaps even barricades.

It seems to me that, regarding cinema, theater, etc., you continue undaunted to be an Enlightenmentist and a positivist, who has rightly ignored Croce. And so far, everything in common between the two of us. But from here on a... diachrony opens up. Naturally, I am convinced that I am right: for the simple reason that I have followed the evolution of the linguistic and semiological sciences as best I can, while you, less interested in these problems, for many reasons, ignore this evolution. This forces you to judge aesthetic facts only on an aesthetic level.

You therefore judge films only as a pure aesthetic fact. While, like any other "metalinguistic" expression, films also presuppose a purely linguistic (or rather semiological) approach: which is not obligatory, of course. But, once we have agreed to face it, we must do so clearly, if possible. You let me drag you into discussing cinema on a linguistic and semiological level; but you did not realize, naively, that at this linguistic and semiological level, you continued to use models of aesthetic or generically cultural judgement. Which means that with a grammarian who talks about "adjectives", precisely as a grammarian, you start discussing the "formal" value of adjectives. The grammarian would look at you in amazement. What does it matter to him if the adjective "beautiful" or "ugly" is used aesthetically and culturally in the right way? For him "beautiful" and "ugly" are two qualifying adjectives and that's it.

Now, I think that a critic cannot ignore grammar, even if the aim of his judgment is aesthetic.

I must know, as a literary critic, not only that "beautiful" and "ugly" are two qualifying adjectives etc., but I must also know the most unthinkable subtleties of the grammatical code (which is not only what you learn at school; and which it is descriptive, and not normative, not normative, dear Alberto!).

The same goes for cinema: I will be a better critic on an aesthetic level the more I am a connoisseur of cinematographic grammar: that is, I will be better able to analyze formal facts the more I will also be able to carry out a grammatical analysis.

The grammar of cinema is still to be done; but, for a few years, semiology on the one hand and the theory of communications on the other

have opened up extraordinary possibilities of knowing what cinema is as a "system of signs".

Here, the redefinition of every form of communication, including the written-spoken language, as a "system of signs", has been the great revolution of these years, which cannot, as you do, be ignored. The notion of a "system of signs" applied to cinema and theater nullifies the pseudo-rational constructions on cinema and theatre, constructed on a purely aesthetic or generically cultural level, to which you are still faithful. Of course your ideas are worth their intelligence, not their reliability.

As a "system of signs", cinema has, among other characteristics, that of being "audiovisual". This is a fact. Would you happen to discuss it? At the cinema (I'm not saying, mind you, in the films) the characters talk. The semiologist could write volumes on this fact. I summarize it like this: cinema is a system of signs, in which the reality of a "man who speaks" is expressed, rather than through a symbol, through that same "man who speaks". And therefore the spectator "recognizes" that man (young or middle-aged, Milanese or Neapolitan, idiot or intelligent, worker or petty-bourgeois, etc., etc.) through the same code with which he recognizes a similar man in reality.

All this is said outside of any aesthetic judgement. The cinema semiologist is not interested in whether "that man who speaks" is aesthetically or culturally valuable: for him he is a "man who speaks" and that's it, just as for the grammarian "handsome" or "ugly" are two qualifying adjectives and that's it .

Oh, and now we come (go up or down) to the aesthetic level.

In a film (I no longer say, now, in the cinema) "a man who speaks" aesthetically is a form. Can you ignore the author's desire to have given a "form" through an audiovisual technique - the image of man and his word? No, you can't ignore this. You cannot make a dissociation that is only convenient for you! You cannot ignore the totality of that form. It, as you would say, "is what it is": if you ignore or separate a single element from it, it is no longer itself: that is, it is no longer a form, which is always the sample of a totality, and is always autonomously exhaustive of a reality.

The form "man who speaks" (in this case a blond Neapolitan who speaks Swedish, let's say) requires a judgment that takes into account the balance of everything of which it is composed. I could play a joke on you, if we had money and time to waste: I would shoot a scene, and then I would dub it,

not with different words, but with different shades of intonation. Well, you would see, very simply, that that scene would no longer be the same scene, both at the level of expression and at the level of intonation.

No, dear Alberto, come with me to a dubbing session, and then you will see that the word not only completes the image, but makes it "formally" different.

And therefore stop thinking that cinema must be decoded only on an aesthetic level, because, excuse me, it is impossible: it is impossible to pretend that cinema is not a "system of signs", and that films, only films, are metalinguistic, that is allow an aesthetic interpretation. And also stop thinking that words in screenplays don't have a literary or aesthetic value. Because this offends me personally: and I don't give a damn about possibly being one of those very rare cases you're talking about. There are: and this, alas, is important for me.

## BOURGEOIS IN PARIS

If I had lived in Paris (allow me another half page of the diary) I would have had completely different hates and loves. I would not have hated the bourgeoisie as I hate it now, here in Italy (as a social class, not in individual creatures). In fact, in Paris the bourgeoisie would have physically presented itself to me as an enormous mass of adorable individuals. I would not have seen beyond the (cultural) world in which I would have lived, because it is vast and deep. The small lost groups who live - not even as real elites - in the large and small cities of this increasingly vulgar bourgeois Italy, are entire populations in Paris. Perhaps, instead, I would have loved the people less: not realizing that the defects and violence of the Parisian people are due precisely to the fact that the bourgeoisie produced that enormous, almost autonomous intellectual elite: a city of God, a Platonic republic, at interior of a brutal world, which offers the people brutal models to imitate.

n. 39, 27 September 1969

## IN THE HEART OF THE CYCLONE

Let's put the emphasis on the "private" moment of experience, let's take a single as a single (naturally by pure hypothesis). And let's take two children: the two children that my reader from Lausanne indicated as victims of monsters, the little girl from Asti and the boy from Viareggio. Well, the reader from Lausanne gives an official and idyllic version of the

two tragedies: the version that 1) divides the world into good and bad, 2) sees the bad as "monsters", and thereby removes them from himself, gets rid of them , declines all responsibility.

But we know that it would be too convenient for it to be like this. There were no bad monsters that caused good victims to die: there was a tragic encounter between two creatures. In the filing cabinet of my good reader from Lausanne, what place would the little girl from Asti and the boy from Viareggio actually occupy? Perhaps, and this makes them even more dear and moving, taking them away from hagiography, future sinners, or perhaps already little sinners: children already strongly marked by their future, which, according to official canons, would probably have been a future of "bad guys" or even "monsters", poor creatures. She is a "lost girl", he is a "different boy": both of them have been made by their potential unhappiness as outcasts, now unhappy to the point of voluntarily seeking unhappiness (and the self-punishment of death). We are therefore, in their cases (seen according to an absolutely questionable hypothesis of mine, but it doesn't matter, because there are naturally thousands of objectively similar cases), upstream of any criminal or, at least, abnormal actions. We are in the midst of trauma. We are inside, in the heart of the cyclone that is forming. In this dramatic, even tragic relationship with normal values, there is therefore the possibility of the birth of new values, or at least the crisis of the old ones: when a thirteen-year-old boy or girl suffers savagely from their diversity, to the point of dying prematurely. , it means that there is something that doesn't work in the official values, that in fact they are in reality, at the limit, negative values, pure convention, a pact established between men just to get by, and made ferociously repressive by power (because also power must carry on).

## THEY ARE ALL POOR

All those who are in prison today when they were children were like the children of Viareggio and Asti. Furthermore, many of them were locked up, at that age, in re-education institutions, which are the true places where future criminals are trained, given that in them they learn the false values of petty-bourgeois morality, which serve or to oppress more, or to become instruments of blackmail. But I realize that I have moved on to the second point of my note, that is, I am placing the emphasis on the social aspect of trauma...

Because - and my reader from Lausanne, in all honesty and good faith, didn't realize this - the prisoners are all poor.

Yes: prisons are full of men and women who come from the working classes, from the underclass, from the lower middle classes. The middle class or rich are rare, they can be counted on the tips of the fingers (Riva, Scirè...). This will also have its own meaning. And the fact that statistics reveal an absolute majority of poor people among thieves, robbers and murderers will also make sense: while the proportion changes in the field of sexual crimes. Repression affects the poor where he is poorest, that is, in his entire being; while it hits the rich man only where he is most vulnerable, that is where, having made his economic calculations, he has decided to be more severe with himself. Moralism (primarily sexual) is the first tool for the efficiency of a well-organized society.

In conclusion, the racist attitude towards prisoners is nothing more than a form of the racist attitude against the poor. Racism is unconscious class hatred. Compare American racism: it has been, up until now and still today, an unconscious class hatred. But since blacks have begun to fight and become aware of themselves as a poor class, the dark and indecipherable racist hatred is transforming into a very clear and very decipherable class hatred. That is, the hatred that an Italian bourgeois feels for a communist, not for a "southerner" or a prisoner (which is still obscure and indecipherable).

n. 41, 11 October 1969

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Dear reader, I've been writing this column for about a year. I'm not in the mood to take stock (which would amount to yet another examination of conscience). I just want to note it. I went through some unpleasant trials, like a soul in Purgatory. I made many more enemies than the ones I had. I said many things that I shouldn't have said: sometimes I did well, other times I did bad. But in no case do I regret it. I hate noble silence. I also hate bad, rushed prose. But better bad and rushed prose than silence. A man proceeds simultaneously on various fronts, and pushes forward to various heights. «Chaos» is a front of small daily battles, and therefore sometimes even petty ones; and it is at a journalistic level (even if I have not always been able to maintain it, with disorderly moves towards poetry and essayism). But the day you live in also counts. It is, by definition, the home

of the "daily newspaper". Must a writer pretend to be eternal, great, out of time, and to use the "everyday" only if it is considered a stylistic category?

I then talked too much about myself. Naturally, I find it difficult to defend myself on this point. I would have excuses and alibis, but, this time, I keep quiet about them; I would also have some cruel diagnoses and self-accusations: but I keep quiet about these too, having set out to avoid mea culpas. This has not been a glorious year for our national, nor even international, history. For a trip to the moon, how many regressions on earth. It was a year of restoration. What was most painful to note was the end of the Student Movement, if we can talk about an end (but I hope not). In reality, the novelty that students brought to the world last year (the new aspects of power and the substantial and dramatic relevance of the class struggle) has continued to operate within us, mature men, not only for this year, but, I think, now, for the rest of our lives. The unfair and fanatical accusations of integration directed at us by the students were, after all, fair and objective. And - badly, of course, with all the weight of old sins - we will try not to forget it anymore.

## THE STUPID SERVANTS

A Soviet director, S. Yutkevič, made some horrendous statements about Italian cinema (which he saw in Venice). Di Porcile says that it is an example of the nefariousness that can be achieved by a "Western director"; against the Satyricon he delivers a truly bigoted tirade worthy of the ancien régime. Stalinism evidently did not end with Stalin. The servile and pedantic tutor language of Soviet intellectuals has not changed at all from the 1950s onwards.

Our director doesn't know a word of Italian, I would like to know how he can judge a work like Porcile as half (the most important) based solely on the oral emission of a text in poetry. This is not only bigoted but dishonest. As for the Satyricon (I must say in parentheses that the dubbing of this film - the cause of my brief controversy with Moravia - is actually beautiful: and I must add that the Satyricon, certainly a very fragile film, was not loved by the critics, who praised so much insincerely, for silly reasons - the usual ones - of unrequired official defense of the spectator) as for Satyricon, I repeat, when they finally make a similar film in the USSR, we will be able to return our greetings to the Soviet intellectuals - those of the neo-Stalinist

regime, of course: because those who are in the labor camps would certainly have loved Italian films.

And then we add that the «Moscow Festival» is the most shameful of all festivals. Not even in the most retrograde "Western" parish is such a silly and idiotic need for entertainment from kids who have run away from school conceivable. And to think they had the courage to invite me! Enough: the myth of the USSR is not only over, but has ended up becoming a negative and threateningly ridiculous myth. I am speaking, of course, of the ruling class, not of the Russian nation.

It certainly can't last like this. But I quote from «Unità»: «A writing containing vulgar attacks on Italian communists appeared in the Moscow magazine “Okt'jabr”, under the signature of Vsevolod Kočetov, who is also the magazine's director. The title of the work that is defined as a "novel" is "But what do you want?". The September issue of the magazine publishes the first episode. Kochetov is a person of some notoriety in the USSR. His writings have always had political ambitions. One of his most positive characters stood out for not wanting to remove Stalin's portrait from his study."

«l’Unità», naturally, argues against the bestiality of the magazine «Okt’jabr»: but it certainly doesn't get to the bottom of it - this won't be the occasion for which it will finally get to the bottom of it. But let at least foolish servants like Yutkevič and Kochetov be considered as such, and not pass as spokespersons for the Russian people: closed in an inexplicable and tragic silence.

## THE CROWD, WHAT IS IT?

Having experienced the Crowd in recent days (in Zafferana, Sicily, there was a lynching atmosphere), it was natural for me to respond immediately to a letter, signed by Massimo Baldini, who asks me questions, precisely, about the Crowd (topic of his degree thesis). The questions are as follows:

1) How would you define... the social phenomenon «Crowd»? What is the relationship between this and the "public" phenomenon?

2) What is your overall opinion of the Crowd? Is the crowd always organised? Does he have bosses? And what characteristics do these have? Does the individual in the Crowd undergo transformations?

3) Have you ever taken part in a crowd? Have you ever observed it as a spectator? What hit you?

4) What do you think of the behavior of women in the crowd?

And here are my answers.

1) The crowd is first of all an urban phenomenon. The first crowd was in Aleppo, I think, which is the oldest city, i.e. the oldest market, in the world. Therefore the first characteristic of the crowd is that of not being alone, but of being mixed with its goods: objects of exchange, of the market, and, today, of consumption. The second characteristic is that of being a "large number" but not being a "mass": in fact it is a large number of individuals, as they are present in flesh and blood. The third characteristic is that of having, at times, common feelings - rallies, random demonstrations, lynchings, etc. - which however [are] a quantitative, and not synthetic and therefore abstract, sum of individual feelings.

The cinema audience is "mass"; in fact it is unrepresentable except in statistics or reports, and obeys average reactive rules, identified by abstraction. On the contrary, the theater audience is a "crowd" because it falls under the dominion of sense perception and obeys concrete, I would say physical, reactive rules. Therefore cinema can be a mass medium; theater no, never, even if it addressed enormous "crowds".

2) You cannot make a judgment on the crowd: it is by its ontological nature, and therefore must be accepted or felt, not judged.

Crowds are not useful: they are there.

They are organized by the necessity that shapes them: for example, in ancient Aleppo, the market; today, an exit from school or factory etc. Or, in the exceptional cases in which the crowds are guided by a common feeling - for example lynching - it is this feeling that organizes them: and therefore it would be better to say the structure.

In these last cases contemplated (exceptional) there may be leaders, but obviously completely impromptu. If there are non-extemporaneous leaders, they were evidently created outside the crowd, prior to it: let's say in the headquarters of a party, in a church, etc.

The characteristics of extemporaneous leaders are those of possessing an exceptional ability to feel common feelings: that is, of being an exact mixture of pathology and mediocrity.

The transformations that an individual undergoes in a crowd are evidently profound: and this is the question that would require the most space and time. I will therefore limit myself to saying that in my opinion the man in

the crowd undergoes the same regressive process that he undergoes in certain dreams interpreted according to Jung's psychoanalysis.

3) Once, in 1937, I think, when Vittorio Emanuele III came to visit Bologna. I "was part" of the crowd that had gathered in Piazza San Petronio to celebrate him. I suffered so excruciatingly from claustrophobia that from then on I no longer wanted to "be part" of a crowd. Sometimes I find myself in the middle of it, which is different. For example, in traffic. Or in a market, like near Kano, in Northern Nigeria (which must have been identical to that of ancient Aleppo): but in this case I feel like a complete stranger, a pure observer.

Other "crowds" that I observe - because I can no longer really be part of them - are the crowds in stadiums, at a football match. The only observation I happened to make about these crowds qua crowds is that the crowds of 1969 are identical to the crowds of 1939.

The characteristics of a woman in a crowd are similar to those I have described for possible "extemporaneous leaders". Indeed, I would say that in crowds women are always, in general, potential leaders.

n. 42, 18 October 1969

## PESSIMISM AND SMILES

There are considerations to be made, and they are made. For example, this one by Arbasino from Frankfurt, regarding the «Book Fair», in the «Corriere della Sera»: «Finally, the protest assembly, once installed within the contested institution, imitates its structures and it becomes an organ of it. It also becomes an attraction and spectacle. Daniel Cohn-Bendit cannot fail to notice this immediately, and arrives rather angrily to argue that we need to give ourselves other structures and other institutions, not infiltrate the vilified ones, or even worse imitate them in bureaucracy and pedantry. But at this point, by making the protest within the protest, he himself becomes a show within a show, and the joy of the television operators is equal only to that of the visitors who paid only four marks for the ticket."

Bene.

Is there anything to laugh about?

I don't find it very pleasant to "be right" on such a question. It appears from these innocently amused observations by Arbasino that our world would be an entropy, that is, that class struggle would no longer be a real fact. It turns out that everything "fits in". It also turns out that knowing this

is supreme wisdom. But you can be proud of an acceptance. To escape from the eternal egg of entropy, through any "Orphic" tangent (in Orphic rites the eggs were broken), Arbasino possesses a sense of humor. Others may possess the vocation to asceticism. Still others the most absolute innocence.

Everything integrates in the eternal return: humorists, saints and innocents know this. So what, Arbasino? Realize that your smile of "he who knows" is based on an ascetic form and an innocence (degenerate as much as you want), which contradict that smile of yours. They cancel it. Have the courage to at least be serious, given that that laugh, if observed a little better, is a grin, a mortuary grin, a funereal grimace - a veil stretched over something terrible, that is, the tragedy of the world that presents itself under the contingent form of the impossibility of class struggle seen at least as a descent of barbarians from another world.

Fanatical Marxists call an attitude like yours "fascist" tout court. But essentially, you must realize that the acceptance of the world as it is, with its ineluctable order, its paternal shadow, its fraternal struggle, its norms to be respected as a cruel but necessary evil, its secular charm, it is, all things considered, what intoxicates a fascist. In him there is the pride of being "scandalous" in that he accepts that world which does not want, indeed condemns, any scandal. He is exalted by the "personal" decision to serve the authority: to impose his initiation into the old ritual as a novelty so new that it has the biased and overbearing air of a renunciation of every other possible choice. I am speaking of course about the young fascists, who are still disinterested. Their narrow-mindedness or refoulement is matched only by their profound and total pessimism.

But your smile at the nonsense of the protesters and Cohn-Bendit also arises from the same pessimism. Pessimism which can be the source of many other, less banal and blessed smiles.

## TYPE 2 HUMANITY

I read with extraordinary interest in the Express (6-12 October 1969) an interview with Henry Ford (very photogenic). The interviewer fulfills all his obligations: the obligation to be detached, the obligation to be gifted with humour, the obligation, above all, to be intelligent. But if these obligations, exercised on a poor devil or on an artist, or in any case on a common mortal who lives honestly and prosaically the problems of his time, are unjust and offensive, exercised on Henry Ford seem to have, for once, the tone Right.

Not that I want to ingloriously rage against Ford: he is, as often happens, an innocent and nice man (his capitalist crimes are involuntary, like those of wild animals): but it is an objective fact that the presumption of the privileged interviewer and, by duty, intellectually superior, is corrected by the direct presence of power.

What is striking in this interview is Henry Ford's absolute lack, I am not saying of any interest in the problems of the contemporary world as they are experienced daily and perhaps even banally, I am not saying his ignorance of them: but his living outside of them, in a world that has nothing to do, I would even say linguistically, with ours. His perspectives are totally different. Just as there is an innocence of poverty, there is also an innocence of power. For example, listen to this sentence: «In my opinion, your big problem is that everything is always done secretly by you. It is the taste for secrecy that prevents you from taking advantage of the teachings of others. Information about the art of doing business must circulate. For me, the difference in level between the technicians on both sides of the ocean is not the most important difference. What clearly divides them lies in their management methods. The Americans seem to me to use their industrial potential more effectively, thanks to management." Had the idea of the Vietnam War even vaguely occurred to him: no, evidently for him this war is one of the many natural forms of utilizing industrial potential and that's it. I had never found myself so immediately faced with the enormity of the innocence of power: that is, with another type of humanity.

n. 43, 25 October 1969

## «SUPER SONG» (WITH REDNESS)

It's incredible what my eyes saw last night, for no more than five minutes, all too exhaustive, on television. In those five minutes I was having dinner in a hurry, and my eyes couldn't help but fall on the "video" turned on, right in front of the table (my mother and my aunt are among the damned who watch television every evening).

My gaze was acrid, of course. In fact, for the whole half hour before dinner, I had been correcting proofs, and the silly and futile voice, full of unbearable optimism, of the television, had tormented me.

Sour, my eyes were, but all in all quite distracted and distant. I only realized after a while what I was seeing: two women very similar to each other, they were performing evolutions, with absolute ease, like two spring-

loaded automatons, who only know how to make those two or three gestures, capable to give an unalterable and iterative satisfaction to the child who observes them. Two or three idiotic moves, set in a rhythm that wanted to be joyful but was instead just easy. What did those little gestures, those small pats and those neck jerks allude to? It wasn't clear enough, but certainly to something extremely conventional anyway: to a collegial and orgiastic joy, in which the woman appeared like an idiot, with humiliating plumes on her, an indecent little dress that both hid and highlighted the roundness of body, just as a dirty and bigoted old commander imagines them, dreams them, wants them. Everything that was presented as light was instead heavily vulgar. The "disparity of the sexes" was shamelessly flaunted as a fatal and overbearing law of a "common sentiment". (You fight for a divorce, and then you continue to want and see the woman as a buffoon, dressed and decked out as if for a slave market?)

Once the ballet was over (in which another half a hundred people were engaged, boys and girls intent on movements that made them blush), two typical middle-aged Italian men appear on a shiny and whitish stage, as if made of plastic. : one rather tall and balding, the other a very peppery basset. The first thing that they, through their "physical language", showed off was their only partial presence there. That is, they seemed to be busy being there and not being there: you never know, they seemed to say, maybe it's good to find us here, but maybe it's better to make it clear that we don't want to be here. They started talking and moving. The old Venetian clowns of the Banana circus or the Cragna circus certainly did better: however the technique was the same: the basset was the comedian, and the other the sidekick. The underlining of the situation - the comedian had to appear naive and mocked, the other had to appear to be a straight man who mocks, in the name of the normal laws of logic and common sense - were of a crudeness that made one feel uncomfortable. The idea of being forced to obey the rules of a game imposed by two such modest and vulgar people (straight out of the "average", as in a laboratory) gave a sense of suffocation and rebellion. At this point my dinner was finished, and I left.

The reader who (alas) knows about it will have understood that this is the debut of Canzonissima (I blush, literally, writing this word). I don't want to delve into the controversies that I know are raging around this TV program. I know this because I quickly read, and immediately remove, the titles of these controversies. I imagine that there is controversy because the

transmission is bad. But it's not about ugliness. The cultural level of what I saw last night, in those five minutes, is typical. In ninety-five percent of cases you can't see anything more beautiful or uglier than this on television. If you argue about... then you have to argue about all of television, with the same heat (I'm amazed that today in the «Giorno» an entire page is dedicated to this beautiful problem, albeit unfavorably!). It's not a question of ugliness or beauty. It's a question of vulgarity. And the vulgarity of television comes from its subculture. It is not even true that television modestly replaces the "bingo" of family evenings. There is only part of the truth in this (very depressing after all). In fact, the "bingo" of the old evenings, which lasted until a few decades ago, still had its cultural reason for being. It was a minimal act of culture of a peasant civilization, with its forced curfews, its stasis, its poverty. Television is not this: in its cultural function it has all the arrogance of power; of industrial power; that he wants, and determines and conditions a family evening that has nothing to do with the family evenings of the ancient world. In the latter, in fact, a concrete daily ceremony was celebrated, which had its particularistic roots in a small closed world: a small river, a chain of hills, some surrounding walls. Today the reference of those beautiful family evenings in front of the video is not local, concrete - modest but profound - to the reality of a small homeland, but to the productive reality of an entire nation, which alters the meaning of the family, and makes it no longer a core of innocent conservatives, but a core of anxious consumers.

not. 44, November 1, 1969

## MARCO'S TRUTHS

Dear Marco Baldisseri - I call you "dear" as they use in letters - and perhaps even in some way you are mine - even if I consider you guilty.

Why am I writing to you? I have nothing to say to you and nothing to ask you. But, through you, I have something to say or ask the average Italian men.

Average Italian men are the ones who educated you, arrested you, and now they are relentless in judging you and re-educating you. Your relationships with these average Italian men have been, and are, to say the least, tragic.

Now these average Italian men are looking for the truth from you. And I too, albeit for other interests and for other purposes, seek it.

It will be very difficult for the judges to get the truth from you. By now they are forced, by the notoriety of the affair in which you are implicated, to question you only in good manners. And this forces them to adopt methods - I suppose - of comprehensiveness, of logic, and also in a certain sense of bonhomie and indifference. The unspoken meaning of their attempts to extract the truth from you (in addition to the objective threat of prison) is: «If you tell the truth, you return among us, to the bosom of society that awaits you with open arms. Confess to integrate."

In short, they would like you to read the Gospel as they interpret it; they would like you to become "moral" to reconfirm the goodness of their morality. And instead, like this, you will never confess. Precisely because they play your game. It is precisely by leveraging "their" morality that you were able to do what you presumably did: all based, however, on blackmail, that is, on moral terrorism. And furthermore, remaining silent, not betraying one's companions, and being loyal, even if for aberrant ends, is also part of "their" morality. Finally, it is "their" morality that has, as they say, repressed you, made you an abnormal boy, with a wrong but coherent inner life (as, a doctor would explain to you, in cases of paranoia).

If you read the writing preceding this one, addressed to a communist leader, you can read the sentence: «I am only a communist who feels her impotence in the face of the primordial force that makes the exploited into involuntary consentors...».

You are one of those men who, exploited, instead of rebelling, become involuntary consenters. But since, at the same time, the society that exploits you represses you, you are also restless (to put it mildly); and here you transform your consent, your obedience, into an aberrant form of rebellion: so you militate in a right-wing party and act like a hooligan.

You are not stupid. It would take nothing to convince you that for a child of workers to be a monarchist or fascist is madness. And instead of convincing you of this, they give you, I imagine, moral sermons, entice you through the beauty of the return to morality. Evidently in prison it is inconceivable to talk about politics: but it is only by having political, and not moralistic, conversations with you that you could be convinced to look at yourself and your case objectively; and lead you to the non-sentimental but reasoned desire to tell the truth.

not. 45, November 8, 1969

# THAT MOTORCYCLE HEADLIGHT

Dear Visconti, do you mind if I speak to you with sincerity as a friend and also with the intemperance and inappropriateness that characterize the interventions of friends? Because, let it be clear, first of all, that I cannot help but consider you my friend, and I cannot help but consider myself your friend. This seems natural to me in things. I see it in your physical presence, in your mold and in your dough. I feel it thinking about me thinking about you. My sympathy for you is unalterable. I didn't want you (except, really, for the space of two or three minutes) even when they told me that on French television you advised Callas against making a film with me; even when they told me that you were in Venice alongside Fellini, complicit with him in speaking ill, without naming him, of the absentee (that is, of me: I was absent to protest against two trials due to my presence in Venice the year previous. I would never have expected Fellini's solidarity, obedient son. But yours...). Well, I want to talk to you about your film and what its objective function is, as they say, in the current moment of Italian cinema.

Your film falls into the second part: from the moment in which the headlight of a motorcycle flashes opaquely along a dark street, barely illuminated by an atrocious dawn (which is a sublime moment, as a boy from «Cahiers» would say somewhat fatuously). » and as I say, seriously, me). From that moment on your inspiration has waned: the massacre is done "cinematographically", without mystery, with liters of red dye on the bodies of generic workers; the SS Aschenbach falls apart, becoming a character of convenience, a character of an appendix novel - reaching the point of nibbling grapes, while his son is about to rape his mother - with the calm of De Sade's academic characters; all the other characters also fall apart, losing all mystery: they even explain themselves and their feelings, pedestrianly and pedagogically, as Martin does in front of the SS, explicitly; or they end up caricaturing themselves like their mother, who becomes a piece by Ensor after having been a piece by Thomas Mann (a little remade, of course). The siege of the villa of the gods is scruffy: indicated, as in B-series films, by some generic men dressed as SS men on motorbikes, or on foot, in the act of saying goodbye. Plus there's the inexplicable incest. Understand me, I don't say inexplicable because I need logical explanations (there are far too many of them in the film: phrases like "I want to destroy you, mother". Which your screenwriters would have done well to leave to Niccodemi). I say psychologically inexplicable (everything can be invented,

says Tolstoy, except psychology). An "abnormal" man who loves eight-year-old girls is "stuck": his eros is a crystallization, he cannot conceive anything else outside of this; faced with other relationships, especially otherwise abnormal ones, he is powerless. Incest with the mother is certainly not excluded: but for it to occur, a much different congestion of feelings is needed than a desire for revenge that emerged as if in a twist from a banal confession with an SS man (perhaps it would have been more true and justified, even if crazier, if Martin had loved boys instead of loving girls). Instead, the first part of the film, up to that famous motorcycle lighthouse on the lake, is very beautiful, worthy of Senso (which is your best film, not The Earth Trembles). It's very beautiful because there isn't a script with old master scenes underneath, but it's a mosaic, which is completely your work.

I could talk to you for a long time about your film. But I limit myself to making just one more observation: the use of zoom. It is a stylistic innovation within your work; the adoption of a medium of expression that is not strictly traditional and which is used so casually by mediocre directors. But you completely absorbed it into your old style: thus making it a pure veneer of expressive novelty, a small concession to the times. You coded it.

Here we are: your film (which codified the new and reconfirmed the old) lends itself, objectively, to a restoration operation. It's not for nothing that I saw, stunned, one of those atrocious newsreels, born in the lower court of power, which, filming you while you go, I think, to a fashion show, comments: «Well, whoever shows up, a real director». This implies a reaction against everything that cinema has done and discovered in recent years. A cinematic reaction, which is first and foremost political. See the measures for the safety of public order, see the resurgence of censorship (with Gava's threatening project), see the moralistic campaign, see, finally, the revanchism of the old cinema. I hope you have been suspicious of the chorus of consensus, which goes, as for the Satyricon, from right to left. In fact, everyone has a diabolical interest in restoration. It certainly hasn't escaped you, for example, how even in the moralistic campaign the right-wing newspapers and the left-wing newspapers proceeded by mutual agreement, in a touching alliance. I don't know to what extent you are responsible for this objective meaning of your film. If you have calculated a kind of "return to order", with consequent general compliments; or whether

it was an irrational impulse that pushed you to fulfill yourself as you cannot help fulfilling yourself: by remaining faithful to your real experiences. This is you who can say it. I don't want to judge you, but to clarify something for you, which may be right to clarify for me too.

not. 47, November 22, 1969

## DEAR VISCONTI,

I realized that when copying the letter addressed to you (published in this column), I forgot a sentence in the manuscript. The following: «Founded on experiences that have become omens». The entire period must therefore be read: «The first part of your film is very beautiful, because there is no underlying script with old mother scenes, but it is a mosaic, which is completely your work, based on experiences transformed into omens ».

It's a cryptic phrase, a synthesis worthy of a hermetic poem, I admit. It has many meanings together. A literal meaning: «The autobiographical experiences you had as a boy have become experiences for your boy characters: and therefore they are omens, not memories». At the same time, on another non-literal level of reading, the phrase also means: «The experiences made by believing in the duration of a world become omens of the dissolution of that world». Or also: «There is no past and there is no future: experiences are things of the future and omens are things of the past: in fact today is the future of yesterday. And yesterday was a present in which we had experiences that seemed eternal." Etc. I tell you all this because I know well that the letter I wrote to you last time was harsh and even cruel. But if there was a balance to be re-established, I wanted it to be re-established.

The moral is that even a "piece" of cinema that is part of an experience surpassed by others (who have only learned it, but not lived it!) can still be a work of poetry: and therefore everyone must fulfill it according to your experiences, don't deny them. This concerns the first "piece" of your film. As regards the second, the situation is different. Because a "reactionary" will to carry out this operation has been added to a desire to sincerely fulfill oneself according to what one inevitably is.

n. 49, 6 December 1969

## EMBARRASSING INNOCENCE

The Life of a Man has been published, including all of Ungaretti's poems (Mondadori). It's an event. I consulted the book like an oracle, to understand something about a phenomenon that has occupied my life a lot, especially in its first part. What a strange oracle! Now he didn't answer me; now he responded with the exact same words as twenty or thirty years ago; now he replied with a smiling and crazy look; now he responded with a stammer as if in agony taken from his interesting and incommunicable dreams; now he answered without speaking, like a film from which the soundtrack had suddenly fallen out; now he responded by dancing and winking from afar; now he responded by being serious, the professor, Don Ferrante; now he responded by attempting a lesson; now he responded by giving the old answers of an irresponsible and unpunished child.

I didn't get anything from it as far as answers.

Even the questions it asked me were questions that could not be answered. I don't understand how the Italian bourgeoisie managed, in some way, to make Ungaretti an official poet, who only lacks the Nobel. It is true that Ungaretti did little to prevent this from happening. However, the phenomenon remains strange: first, because Ungaretti's poetry, even when it is great, is chaotic, equivocal, childlike, ambiguous, demonic, naive, immature, incomplete; second, because Ungaretti sought the oak crown with only one part of himself, while the other part continued to follow paths that do not really lead to coronations.

I finally understood - outside the book, which remains unknowable and ultimately not even analyzable - how obvious Montale's greater probability of accessing the highest official honors was. Montale eluded with unparalleled elegance the mountains of rhetoric and naivety that Ungaretti persisted in wanting to climb. So the first came to the order: the second never, never. This Life of a Man is an unpresentable book. Full of repetitions, manias, corrections, infinite, eternal, capillary returns on itself. You find a poem from 1914 at the end of the book: but you had already found a variant halfway through; and some fragments here and there everywhere; published and republished with various titles in volumes which in turn were published with various titles.

## SIMPLE THOUGHTS

This work has been pompously made the subject of "variant" studies, as if this were part of the official package. Those "variants", however, are

embarrassing and that's it; fortunately. Often these are very simple thoughts, like "death / is paid for / by living": who doesn't know that? The official Italian critics took seriously this wisdom of a boy who is wise, and filled their mouths with it. Ungaretti's naiveties satisfied the inexhaustible need for banality of Italian petty-bourgeois criticism. Thus a false image of Ungaretti was born, which his crazy "return to order" in times of returns to order, contributed to building; but Ungaretti's rhetoric is as embarrassing as his naivety. It is placed in other fields than those of rhetoric.

In short, after the usual period of incomprehension and hatred, which every "new" poem arouses, Ungaretti's poetry has not only been integrated, but continually proposed as a national good, as a convention of greatness: and we understand why: because it is a poetry of total innocence, which can be mistaken for a convenient innocence, made to be blessed by society. In reality this (wonderful) innocence is also embarrassing, because, like all true innocence, it is shameless: and Ungaretti covers it in vain with (spiritualistic and oratory) veils: it is like a laughing eye whose light cannot be extinguished by no kind of good education.

How much literature Ungaretti created! Because he is almost illiterate. He is eighty years old today: and it is wonderful that these things can be said about him, with a clear mind, without respect, and with the love of a peer!

## LETTER TO ANNA MAGNANI

Dear Anna, I remember an afternoon in September 1943. There is the sun, the smell of the warm countryside. In front of me I see the Casarsa station. It is strangely deserted.

The square is deserted, the white and dusty road that goes towards San Giovanni is deserted. Voices can be heard echoing on the tracks where a freight train is stopped: they are the voices of German soldiers. I don't know why I'm there: it's certainly a coincidence or madness. But this memory floats alone and detached from all the rest of time. The freight train in front of the Casarsa station is full of soldiers: inside the sealed carriages they are standing, crowded, so much so that they cannot move. You can hear their moans and their voices. Two or three carts come running, I don't know where or who called them, with horses driven by women and girls. In the carts there are baskets of fruit and bread. The women hand food to the soldiers through the small windows of the train, from which their hands

protrude desperately. I am writing this letter to you because I know of your love for beasts. I have read in recent days that trains full of slaughter animals, horses or oxen, usually stand still for three or four days in certain border stations. The animals, crowded inside the sealed carriages, do not eat or drink: and often die. Men also died on freight trains heading to Germany, and their bodies remained for days among the bodies of the living, on excrement. In my imagination the two images - that of the carriages full of men and that of the carriages full of animals - are monstrously confused. I am completely devoid of sentimentality towards animals: in this I am above suspicion. Yet precisely because I remember, with an anguish that has remained the same, the martyrs that men suffered then, I pity the martyrs that animals continue to suffer. I know there's nothing I can do. That you, that I can be moved as much as we want, we can protest as much as we want. Those who have interests at stake in that dismal traffic of slaughter animals are infinitely stronger than us, and victory will always be theirs.

n. 50, 13 December 1969

# 1970

## CONGRATULATIONS!

We have arrived at the unbearable Christmas. I have nothing to add to what I said a year ago, here, against this stupid and irreligious party.

Happy birthday to the pagan gift makers! Best wishes to the charismatic industrialists who produce gifts that are all the same!

Best wishes to those who will die of anger in traffic jams and perhaps in a Christian way will insult or stab those who have dared to overtake them or have dared to give a blow to the backside of their holy seventeenth century!

Best wishes to those who seriously believe that the orgasm that will agitate them - the anxiety of being present, of not missing the ritual, of not being equal to their duty as a consumer - is a sign of celebration and joy!

I want to send my best wishes to those who are in prison, whatever they have done (except for the usual fascists, those few who are there); it's true that there are many unfortunate people in the wild, that is, many who need real good wishes all year round (all of us, after all, because we are truly poor, wandering creatures, with all our confidence and our presumptuous smile). But I choose prisoners for polemical reasons, as well as for a certain natural sympathy due to the fact that, knowing it or not knowing it, wanting it or not wanting it, they remain the only true protesters of society. They are all members of the dominated class, and their judges are all members of the dominant class.

## THINKING OF DEBRAY

Never since the time of fascism have prisons been so full of political prisoners. They are essentially the only "bourgeois" representing their social class in prison. And the qualification of "political prisoner" is the only one that for now truly makes a worker and an intellectual, a worker and a student, "brothers".

Debray is almost a symbol of these political prisoners. In a city where the temperature is 40 and 50 degrees above zero, he is kept closed in a room of just a few meters in surface area and without windows. On this holy Christmas occasion it is him that I think of, symbol of the continuity of the petty-bourgeois ferocity and hypocrisy of the traditional Church.

The looming threat in the world today is a right-wing reaction. The most dangerous of these reactions (this morning I read a leaflet from the MSI which said: "Italians, react") would be the American one; moreover already underway. Such right-wing reactions are evidently favored by certain left-wing extremisms. On this I would like to make an observation: such extremisms are generally judged as "childhood diseases of communism". No, I disagree: such extremisms are forms of bourgeois subculture.

Look at American "dissent." In average cases it represents the "other America", as they say, which is one of the most positive phenomena of the contemporary world. In extreme cases it is instead a subcultural phenomenon. I mean an oppositional subculture, but still a subculture. It is a secession or self-exclusion, made in the name of naive notions (anti-consumerist, anarchist, palingenetic) and obtained through religious life systems. But it is this religiosity that is disingenuous, spiritualistic, and ultimately alienating like the myth of producing and consuming accepted by hard-working fathers and integrated children. In Europe this alienating sacredness, in the connective tissue of neurosis, takes on Marxist ideology as its ideology: but its alienating characteristics are preserved. In America the religious revival is explained moreover by the fact that Americans, with the exception of a few almost all Anglo-Saxon families, are in the vast majority the children of sub-proletarian emigrants, with an archaic, precisely magical-religious culture. So the regression is explained all too easily (see Scientology, which is precisely the "sophia" of the shamans of the lands from which Americans emigrated only a few generations ago).

## «THE MAN DESTROYER OF THE WORLD»

We had gathered to discuss the contents of a new magazine. There were friends and there were "new" men, trained in the avant-garde and in the student movement. Among the friends there were many of those from «Officina», including L. But in the meantime, a truly great news had happened (which perhaps we were there to discuss), a truth that had become natural in us. Preceding the results of the discussion, in which men more competent or specialists than us, that is perhaps scientists, participated, I had exclaimed: «What is there outside of psychology? What is there that is not psychic?”. But then inside I was ashamed of my presumption, of my superficial terrorism in announcing something that was in the air and that I had immediately made mine, with such aggression. The great innovation

consisted in the fact that space was no longer the space in which we had lived and reasoned until that moment: that is, it was not delimited by the terrestrial horizon and the atmosphere. But something had broken upwards, and the circular shape of space had deformed in one point, taking the shape of a sort of cone, whose vertex was towards the moon: this cone was like a chasm towards the sky which it gave me the panic of a terrible dizziness, which I however tried to mask. The theory that our new non-literate colleagues communicated to us was the contents of a book entitled Man, the Destroyer of the World. And this theory consisted of this: man carries out a chemical transformation of the world within himself: but not "chemical" in the gross and current sense of the word: but rather in a more subtle sense, which belongs to psychology: almost as if even the facts psychic were precisely chemical.

I physically saw this transformation before my eyes, in the space of the world. In the space of the world we could see a layer of matter, which gradually increased, which was precisely the transformation of what is world into what is man. When such matter, at the conclusion of history (and this is important, because it presents history as exhaustible) when such chemically human matter constituted by the transformation of the innocent and non-human world into human, would have saturated the world, it would also have destroyed it.

To illustrate this theory, with a brilliant example, a friend common to all (the former editors of «Officina», the new men and also the scientists), Umberto Eco, was commissioned. He very brilliantly told a metaphor of what I said above. This metaphor consisted of the football championship. With great spirit Eco wrote the story of the first days of the present championship, with the different rankings that changed from day to day: these rankings were displayed by many small flights of stairs dug into the rock of certain artificial public gardens (I would not find it difficult to believe that they were those of Cremona), which were juxtaposed to each other, and on which football players, representing their respective teams, occupied different places in the rankings depending on the events of the championship. By evolving and reaching its end, the championship would have filled the time of the football year with itself, transforming this time into its own history, and thus destroying it.

## ...AT CASARSA

We were at this point in the discussion when L. turns to me and the eyes of some of his other new friends are fixed on me, and suggests that I take drugs: but I firmly opposed it: «Not for the first time, in a time when taking drugs it's a trend and an act of subculture, I will never take drugs" I told him. But while I was speaking, he had grabbed my arm, and from a bottle of the kind in which cologne is sold in village haberdashery shops, he injected (although the needle was missing) a liquid that was indeed hallucinogenic into my arm: a little, just barely, without emptying the syringe. I felt myself physically flooded by the liquid, with a very acute sense of freezing under my skin.

I was already starting to no longer feel like myself: but I still had the strength to take L., drag him out of the door of the house, onto the sidewalk (we were now in Casarsa, the discussion had taken place in the dining room on the ground floor of my maternal home in Casarsa) and now the sun shining on the sidewalk was that unique thing that I had experienced at twenty years old, during the war, in the time I lived there. A sweet and still sun, indescribable. I hit and hit L. hard with my fists, leaving him on the ground. Then I ran upstairs, into the room which in those years was the bedroom of one of my aunts: there was the old bed and in front, between the two windows, the dusty dressing table: the windows were half closed, but there the powerful and sweet light of that sun filtered through. I went in, desperate, to lie down on the bed; but as soon as I entered I didn't know whether to close the door with the clamp attached to the jamb or not. The danger was, if I didn't close it, that L. would come in to finish my injection, while I had lost consciousness: if I closed it, the danger was that no one would be able to enter in case I felt ill.

I lay down on the bed, but I don't know if I left the door open or closed. Lying on the bed I awaited the effect of the drug with a certain not entirely unpleasant curiosity, even though I was mentally and physically ill. It was about to make itself felt, but I was amazed, wondering why the unhealthy and indeed deadly feeling of summer heat I was wearing didn't make me go away. This gave me such terror that I woke up. Upon waking up, before getting up and starting to write this note in the middle of the night, I remembered many things and facts about the Casarsa of that time that had no longer come to mind for more than a decade, although it cannot be said that I remembered them. were forgotten: but it was as if I had forgotten

them, in reality, and a series of days and feelings in my life presented themselves to me as new and never experienced.

n. 1, 3 January 1970

## AVERAGE

*Dear Mr. Pasolini, I am a reader of «Tempo», not a frequent reader but still a reader. I read in issue 48 of November 29th his response to Mr. Sergio Latorraca who, among other things, I don't know who he is, nor am I interested in knowing at the moment. I'm writing you two lines that perhaps you won't even read, and this too is probably relatively interesting to me.*

*The reality is that I feel the need to respond for an internal question, almost of principle, regarding your considerations regarding the dangers deriving from the average man (who according to you must necessarily, albeit at an unconscious level, be fascist), I I am precisely an average (anti-fascist) man, a man who works on average 8-9 hours a day, who enters the office at 8 (with a tolerance of about 10 minutes) and leaves around 7pm, except for the break of meal.*

*I have two children and a wife, a young family, in short, which represents a precise ethical reference in my necessarily bourgeois life.*

*The point is this, now.*

*Beyond your Byzantine distinctions between the "rational and irrational meaning" of the average man, let me point out to you that the "murky and squalid" environment in which you would like to insert people like me, existing in Italy and throughout the world, is vice versa the its environment, albeit understood from different angles.*

*You, dear Mr. Pasolini, are essentially a squalid and murky character and it is from people like you, in a logical general sense, that the "crimes and crimes" to which even the most recent news reports have accustomed us are "ripened".*

*Therefore, don't try to grasp at straws by pretending to wave glorious flags in the name of noble ideals which, all things considered, are not very suitable for you.*

*And one more piece of advice: don't publish this "sleazy bourgeois" letter of mine because it would risk meeting too much consensus, partially and momentarily emptying your "Chaos" column of the only meaning that can be attributed to it up to now, that commercial.*

*Keep it.*

*An average man*

# DEAR AVERAGE MAN,

not having been able to take the phrase with spirit, "in the squalid and murky environment of average men they mature etc.", and indeed, having turned the phrase against me against which I was arguing, because it was racist, demonstrates that you are an average man precisely in its worst meaning, that is, based on that ideology which is by definition adverse to both religion and reason, which is "common sense". Why don't you go and read those pages against "common sense" that Kant wrote, a man about whom you cannot have the degrading suspicions you have about me? Note: those who use the expression "squalid or murky environment where they mature etc.", (an expression against which I made some painful irony in my page on the average man) are guilty of an infinite number of faults, which in the midst of neo-capitalism is little define tribal. I'll make a bare and incomplete list of them.

1) They are racist. In fact they are distinguished, I would say, theologically, or rather, anthropologically, from the subjects of whom they are forced by necessity to speak: prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, swindlers, etc. They are detached, "separated" from conscience and closed in the ghetto, precisely "of the squalid and murky environment".

2) They are blackmailers. In fact, they shut the mouths of alleged members of that ghetto, silencing them through allusion to their sins which the average man condemns, and for which they have no right to citizenship in society. They do, at the bourgeois level of moral indignation (even sincere!) what a small-time blackmailer can do to a prostitute who has a child, to a homosexual who has a mother or a job, etc.

3) They are ignorant. In fact, they ignore everything scientific (let's say on the most basic level, Freud) that has been written about those they relegate to the squalid ghetto, with no other explanation than blind physical repugnance, panic, an adamant principle: all perfectly stupid things. precisely because they are irrational and devoid of any scientific motivation.

4) They are primitive. In fact, they archaically see the forced inhabitants of their ghettos as "scapegoats" on whose shoulders they can place the guilt of the whole society. In the most dramatic days of the Viareggio case, for example, it seemed that the guilt of the concentration camps, of the

Longarone dam or of the Vietnam war all fell on the shoulders of four poor inverts - blackmailed and martyred - deprived of any power, and unable, to blackmail, private and public, to have a normal life and have a normal career.

5) They are bloodthirsty. In fact the "scapegoats" kill themselves. And they, by pointing out to their peers and the authorities, directly or indirectly, the "squalid or murky individuals" as they define them and want them, implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) make them lynching subjects.

I toned down the colors a bit. But things are essentially like this.

n. 2, 10 January 1970

## INSIDE THE CULTURE

We certainly cannot speak of a cultural underworld in relation to the Feltrinelli bookshop, as the center of a certain specific literary-political world. There is no doubt, however, that it is on the highest cultural level. I have always attacked, even with violence, that literary and political world: but ours was a controversy within culture. The ideas developed, in the ideal center of the Feltrinelli bookshop, produced political-literary periodicals (such as the «Fifteen») and a series of books-creative works and documents. The latter are the truly valid thing about that wing of Italian culture: they are the links it establishes with the best international culture (not "cosmopolitan", according to Gramsci's negative definition). However, the neo-avant-garde, officially born in 1963, had its recent evolution and transformation there. It was, at its origins, an anti-traditionalist movement (especially contrary to the recent traditions of the establishment), which contrasted the state of mind of "commitment" with the mocking state of mind of those who "do not believe" and therefore, almost mechanically, for this reason, it "demystifies". I have never believed in this way of demystifying: fatuity can be splendid, as long as it is not literary. And the fatuity of the avant-garde was exclusively literary. In fact, not a single good book came out of it. The Student Movement has overwhelmed the neo-avant-garde, i.e. a purely verbal (and therefore literary) contestation not excluding bad faith (and indeed proclaiming bad faith as a necessary tool for its own ends), implemented by writers whose acceptance of the "system" and therefore of "integration", it was the paradoxical ideological foundation.

The May Revolution has therefore overturned the fatuity of disengagement by imposing a new kind of commitment (which only today, in these very days, has accepted, if not to identify itself with that born from the Resistance, at least to recognize it historically as its prefigurator). The neo-avant-gardists (perhaps in the name of their vaunted "dadà" bad faith, mystifying due to excessive demystification) accepted the May Revolution with great ease: they identified with it beautifully. And since, naturally, terrorism is inherent in every movement programmed by a will that does not exclude bad faith, as a total paradox; and since a certain terrorism is also inherent in every movement based on moralism (the drive to radically claim the purity of orthodoxy, in this case Marxist), the two terrorisms have merged into a kind of monstrum. Therefore many global protestors believed they recognized their literary correlative in fashionable avant-garde literature, as a purely subversive moment of which they were not able to recognize the pure and simple literary truth: and the neo-avant-gardists have absurdly made their pragmatic contestation, the Castro myth of action, etc., pretending to be ignorant of their own ideology according to which the contestation had been solely linguistic or verbal.

The last two literary years have passed under the sign of this mess. Then, recently, as was to be expected, the reactionary actions began: caused by traditionalist terrorism which had been kept in subjection for a long time by avant-garde terrorism. Between the Feltrinelli bookshop and the Campiello Prize there isn't much to be happy about.

This controversy of mine with Feltrinelli culture, I repeat, takes place "within" the culture. Therefore it can only remain silent, now, in the face of the persecution against Feltrinelli and his publishing house, dragged into the horrendous mediocrity of the Italian underworld where two subcultures face each other: on the one hand the official one of the State, on the other that of the protest of second order, for whose action no one can be held accountable, unless it undermines his freedom of opinion and expression, and we don't want to point him out for lynching.

n. 3, 17 January 1970

# Notes and news on the texts

Edited by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude
In “Essays on politics and society” Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milan, 1999)

# TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP Pasolini Archive at the Alessandro Bonsanti Contemporary Archive of the Gabinetto Vieusseux in Florence.

BE Blasphemy. All the poems, edited by Graziella Chiarcossi and Walter Siti, preface by Giovanni Giudici, 2 vols., Garzanti, Milan 1993.

DD Descriptions of descriptions

EE Heretical empiricism

FA The films of others, edited by Tullio Kezich, Guanda, Milan 1996.

LE I Lettere 1940-1954, with a chronology of his life and works, edited by Nico Naldini, Einaudi, Turin 1986.

LE II Lettere 1955-1975, with a chronology of his life and works, edited by Nico Naldini, Einaudi, Turin 1988.

LL Lutheran Letters

PI Passion and ideology

PM Il Portico della Morte, edited by Cesare Segre, Associazione «Fondo Pier Paolo Pasolini», Garzanti, Milan 1988.

PR A country of storms and primroses, edited by Nico Naldini, Guarda, Parma 1993.

RR Novels and stories, edited by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, 2 vols., Mondadori, Milan 1998.

SC Corsair writings

SLA Essays on literature and art, edited by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude, Mondadori, Milan 1999.

ST Stories of the city of God, Roman stories and chronicles 1950-1966, edited by Walter Siti, Einaudi, Turin 1995.

# WARNING

The notes and information are found in the same chronological order in which the texts in this volume are presented. For each text, the place of the first edition is given, followed by the indication of the book in which, if applicable, it was collected. An account is given of the state of the manuscripts or typescripts, when they exist, and of the changes or cuts that occurred in the transition to printing, or in that from printing in a periodical to printing in a volume. The examination of the typescript (or, sometimes, of the various typed witnesses) is obviously more detailed in the few cases in which we are dealing with an essay that has remained unpublished until now. In general, the typescripts do not present serious problems of deciphering nor (with the exception of the one on the «Lavorini case») of ordering.

It is noted when there have been previews of an essay. Pasolini's correspondence was used when it served to clarify the biographical context in which the essay was born. In the event that some short note has been excluded from our volume, because it is substantially repetitive, some excerpts are given in a note to the thematically most similar essay, if deemed useful.

Since the choice of "responses to readers" was very stingy, we have noted the complete list of Pasolini's responses, in the order in which they appeared in the columns of «Vie Nuove» and «Tempo». The choice of interviews was even more limited, but for this very reason the list, if not complete, at least as broad as possible, of Pasolini's interviews will be found in the bibliography.

Complete bibliographical references of the books or articles mentioned in each individual essay are usually given. If Pasolini made any factual errors, it is noted in the note. When Pasolini's essay has aroused a significant response, or when it is itself a response to an essay by someone else, the relevant references will be found. In some special cases, we have tried to reconstruct more widely the wide polemical echo that one or more Pasolini essays have provoked around them.

Finally, some explanatory notes follow to clarify names, historical episodes and current events; in long essays, in which it would have been difficult to immediately trace the passage to which the explanatory note refers, we have specified the page number. In drafting this type of note, we made use of the notes already made by Giovanni Falaschi in P.P. Pasolini, The dialogues, Editori Riuniti, Rome 1992.

As for Pasolini's folders, in which manuscripts and typescripts are preserved, we give a description of them below, with the acronyms with which they will be indicated in the news.

*Casarsa Materials (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)*

Many papers of Pier Paolo Pasolini were recovered in Casarsa - left in the old house when he came to Rome in January 1950 - which over the years had been mixed with texts of various kinds owned by Nico Naldini (his poems, parts of one of his theses, university handouts, etc.). The material must be arranged, not everything can be reconstructed in its original order, also because over time many hands have drawn on that jumble of sheets. At this moment everything is contained in five boxes numbered for convenience from 1 to 5 (the placement is completely random). It was possible to identify, isolate and order only a part of the texts; manuscripts prevail over typescripts, and poems prevail over prose; the period of composition is between 1941 and 1950. As regards the non-fiction, if we exclude the work on Soffici which is dated Bologna, December 1941, there is no trace of the texts that were published in «Architrave» and «Il Setaccio", i.e. dating back to the Bolognese period. However, with a lot of patience, one could reconstruct one or more drafts of the degree thesis because very extensive passages of the essay on Pascoli are scattered inside the cassettes. Among these papers there are also many of the literary essays, interventions or polemical writings published in various newspapers in the Casarsa years (more or less until the beginning of 1950).

*Essays 1950*

In the folder - rust coloured, half sheet size, with elastic band - the indication Passion and ideology (I) has been removed and the title is (Articles, essays etc.) and Roman short stories 1930. This folder, which is part of AP, in an internal file entitled Racconti, elzeviri, articles it contains two texts published in the «Quotidiano» of Rome in 1950, inserted among the scattered essays in this section.

A folder entitled Passion and Ideology (II) was lost.

*PI (III)*

This scrapbook, Passion and ideology (III) (Articles, essays etc.), has the same external characteristics as Essays 1950; acquired by the National Library of Rome and placed in the Manuscripts Section, signature Vitt. Em. 1561/1, includes texts written more or less between 1950 and 1958 for «Paragone», «Giovedì», «La Libertà d'Italia» etc.; pieces that remained unpublished during life and only three essays that will become part of PI. The last papers include two reportages and an incomplete draft of The Long Road of Sand, 1959 (RR I, p. 1479).

*PI (IV)*

Also at the National Library is Passion and ideology (IV) (Articles, essays etc.) with the signature Vitt. Am. 1561/2. The folder type and format are the same as the others. Six typescripts correspond to texts published in PI; many writings were published posthumously in PM and are dated between 1951 and 1954; a file entitled Dialects contains all Pasolini's essays on dialect poets, also dating back to the period 1951-54. Two notes contained in this folder are worthy of note: one is a kind of index: Sbarbaro's Irreligiosity. Pascoli and the twentieth century. Anthology of contemporary poets: Anthology of the Voice - Anthology of the Round - Anthology of the Hermetics - Anthology of the latest generation. The word "heart" in Saba. The other is a note presenting a book of criticism, probably PI in an early phase of composition.

*PI(V)*

At the National Library there is a third folder that interests us here: Passion and ideology (V) (Articles, essays etc.), with the signature Vitt. Am. 1561/3. The external dress is always the same. Twenty-three essays contained herein, accompanied by notes and in different drafts, were published in PI in 1960. The other writings, a few, were published posthumously in PM.

*PI (V) (Unreleased)*

In AP there is a folder (same as the others in format) headed Passion and ideology (V) (Articles, essays etc.) (Unpublished), the composition of which is more complex. A headline on the first page reiterates: Unpublished pieces excluded from "Passion and ideology". A text follows, Two Words to the Reader, which is a first draft of the Note published in PI.

Twelve manuscript and typewritten pages with indexes, lists of names and titles, illustrate the various forms of composition sought or envisaged for PI and precede eight essays, indicated with Roman numerals regarding the dialect from both a poetic and linguistic point of view.

For the rest, the folder contains writings published posthumously in PM (published by the author mainly in the «Punto»); of the unpublished volumes published in «Officina», «Palatina» etc.; unfinished essays and some speeches, interviews or statements. Although there is some text dating back to 1950, the majority of the writings date from 1955 to 1959.

*Scrapbook '54-55*

A list of authors to be reviewed and a whole series of projects for both non-fiction books and anthologies and narrative prose are present in a Work Plan (October 1952) contained in Scartafaccio 1954-55. This AP folder (usual external appearance: rust-colored etc.), although made up mainly of poetic texts that will flow into Le ceneri di Gramsci, contains some prose texts in common with the folders above (for example a part of the dialect Pamphlet ), highlighting a work system that sees Pasolini initially insert both poetic texts and narrative prose into a folder (here are also the Fables

published in «Caffè», see RR I, pp. 1430-4 ), and responses to investigations, and the comparison is due to simple chronological circumstances.

*Brown folder*

A brown leather folder engraved with Pasolini's initials (it is part of AP) contains mainly prose texts (a file entitled Scartafaccio 1959 includes song lyrics rather than poems) composed between 1959 and 1962. Inside there is everything: film reviews for «il Reporter», answers to questionnaires, open letters, book reviews, diary stories, a handwritten screenplay, private letters, etc. It can be said that nothing was published in volume except posthumously (for example in PM and in I films by others).

*Book of crosses*

The book of crosses (1963, September) is a folder that contains many poetic texts but also some notes of an essayistic nature such as a writing on «Belli» published on «Giorno» (see SLA, pp. 2409-15). The date indicated by Pasolini is open, in the sense that he planned to include later texts, while there are also works written previously.

*Note '67-68*

A file originally contained only inside a folded white sheet of paper, titled by Pasolini Notes Notes Articles Interviews etc. (1967-1968) interests us because, apart from some texts that were included in EE, with unpublished appendices regarding the same topics, it contains Pasolini's writings published in «Nuovi Argomenti» and not published in volume.

*Articles '67-71*

A folder packaged externally by others but including texts put in succession by Pasolini, brings together articles, interviews, interventions published in the main newspapers and magazines of those years («Nuovi Argomenti», «Il Giorno», «Filmcritica», «L'Espresso» etc.) and can be dated between 1967 and 1971. Some pieces were also published in EE, some posthumously in PM.

*New linguistic issues*

A folder (light, coffee-milk coloured) intended for AP bears the author's heading Nuove question linguistici (and poems marxiste) (1964-65) '66. The title was set at different times, it is handwritten with red, black and blue pen. The content is very varied and it is difficult to make a precise and precise description of the writings. The text that opens the folder, entitled Civil war or revolution? (with an initial title deleted: Epistolona), presents itself as a speech prepared for a conference ("What does a linguistic examination of the expression "Gran Numero", which was found as an acronym at this intelligent conference, lead us to?"). The topics covered are "the question of young people", the American "New Left", the "Third World" etc. and from internal references this large essay cannot be dated before May 1968. In succession, in the folder there is a block -large notepad with a handwritten title, Il ritmema, half filled with notes regarding the themes addressed in EE, especially in the Cinema section. Three files are inserted between the pages of the notepad, one containing the essay Against television, the second short handwritten poems dated 1966, the third a detailed list with film projects to be made.

Among the other materials in the folder, more or less dated between 1964 and 1966, there are texts or notes from writings published in «Nuovi Argomenti»; a copy of «Rinascita», a. XXII, n. 5, 30 January 1965 which, folded, contains (leaving out unpublished notes or those whose printed release cannot be identified) a series of texts reproduced in EE and the report on the painter Girolamo Romanino; another series of texts found in EE; the Technical Confessions published together with the screenplay of Uccellacci e birdsi; P.P.P.'s responses to a Rai questionnaire about Dante; the review of The World Machine by Paolo Volponi; a writing on the 10th Congress of the PCI etc.

*Code of codes*

A light archive folder headed by Pasolini in pen. The codex of codes contains at the opening a certain number of papers with handwritten notes on language and cinema, three typed indexes and

some titles relating to cinema and reality. None of the indices correspond exactly to the EE index; There are essays on Gadda and Volponi, the Diary of an avant-garde manuscript (M. Ferretti) but above all poetic texts (Marxist Poems), songs and dust jackets alternated variously with texts by EE.

Below you will find drafts of texts published in EE, a conversation between Pasolini and some foreign journalists recorded on the tape recorder on 17 February 1970, an investigation by the University of Wisconsin and some essays entitled Appendices by Pasolini which are published here as Appendix to EE .

Occasionally in other folders we have found texts that we reproduce in this edition but which we will give an account of from time to time (they are often the prose presentations of poetic collections and therefore they are together with the poems).

For folders that have a title equal to or similar to the heading of a text published during the author's lifetime or semi-posthumously, the description will be given among the information regarding the volume.

## NOTES TO “DIALOGUES WITH READERS [1960-1970]”

### FROM «DIALOGUES WITH PASOLINI» ON «VIE NUOVE» [1960-1970]

In this section we present a selection of the pieces published as a response to readers' letters in the Dialoghi con Pasolini column, which appeared in «Vie Nuove» for the first time in issue no. 22 (28 May 1960) and for the last on n. 39 (30 September 1965). A richer selection was published with the title Le belle flagi - Dialoghi 1960-1965, edited by Gian Carlo Ferretti, Editori Riuniti, Rome 1977 (reprint «l'Unità»-Editori Riuniti, Rome 1991, with an excerpt from the introduction by Gian Carlo Ferretti and a preface by Tullio De Mauro). Another volume by Editori Riuniti - The dialogues, edited by Giovanni Falaschi, with a preface by Gian Carlo Ferretti, Rome 1992 - instead collects all of Pasolini's texts on «Vie Nuove», placing them alongside those published as a response to readers on « Tempo», in the section Il chaos (a final index indicates with an asterisk the pieces that were not included in Ferretti's volume).

In 1960 «Vie Nuove» was directed by Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, and some letters from the director relating to the beginning of the column are preserved in AP, together with the typescripts of some pieces. In the first episode, Pasolini's page that we reproduce in this volume on pp. 877-8 is preceded by a note from Macciocchi, which reads among other things:

> We are very happy to enrich «Vie Nuove» with a new column which we announce on this page, with Pier Paolo Pasolini's letter to our readers. It is not the first time that Pasolini collaborates with «Vie Nuove» and readers certainly remember his critical reviews, his investigations on Rome, his sports articles, the beautiful chronicle of Di Vittorio's funeral. [...] Even though we do not want to write critical notes on Pasolini, especially since we have neither the capacity nor the capacity to do so, we nevertheless believe it is our duty towards the readers, in presenting this column, to underline its importance, precisely by remembering how not only is Pasolini at the center of the most important literary experiment of these years, just as he is not only a great writer who accompanies, with severe awareness, an artistic elaboration with a constant critical elaboration, but a writer committed to most combative way possible, because he places a progressive and basically socialist ideological axis at the center of his works (when much of contemporary literature, it must be remembered, refuses any judgment on the reality it describes and, discarding the critical selection, narrates in a chaotic and messy). With all these appreciations we do not intend to scare readers who want to turn to Pasolini, but to encourage them, on the contrary, and make them better understand that the writer to whom they will send their letters is a great friend, worthy of the popular audience on which this weekly bases its strength . «Vie Nuove» is the only Italian periodical, I believe, that receives three hundred letters a week, the only one that will have, with this, three columns of correspondence with readers: the old Vie Nuove replies, which is the column created by Luigi Longo, when the newspaper was founded by him, and in which specialists have been answering thousands of technical, scientific and cultural questions for 15 years; the Letters to the newspaper, which is the readers' forum; and finally this new column of Dialogues with Pasolini, which will begin on this same page in three weeks, and which will have to help our readers against cultural witchcraft, against superstition, against hypocritical diversions, prejudices and false conventionalities, to get out

from the old cultural shell in which clerical morality and fascism have enclosed so much of consciences and minds, and measure the facts and problems with a new yardstick.

While waiting for letters from readers, n. 23 takes up a part of Pasolini's piece published in 22 (here on pp. 877-8), with the addition of a passage from Gramsci's Ashes and one from the Crying of the Digger; the N. 24 gives the ending of A violent life. On the n. 25 (June), the actual column is preceded by this editorial note:

> With this issue of «Vie Nuove», Pier Paolo Pasolini begins his conversation with readers. In this first meeting with his interlocutors, he chose - among the numerous letters received - those that ask him questions about contemporary literature, the political commitment of writers, the problems of language. As far as possible, Pasolini intends to answer, in each issue of «Vie Nuove», a homogeneous group of questions.

Even if the letters were addressed to Pasolini himself at the editorial office of «Vie Nuove», it appears from the AP materials that an initial selection was made by Macciocchi, who sent the writer only the letters to reply to and in some cases suggested the topics to focus on in your answers. The frequency of the column was weekly, but we note several pauses of a few weeks and a longer interruption, due to external circumstances promptly reconstructed by Giovanni Falaschi in his careful note to the text in I dialogues, cit., pp. LV-LXX. The breaks are in September 1960 (from n. 35 to n. 37, to follow the Olympics for «Vie Nuove»); in January 1961 (from n. 4 to n. 9, for the unexpected African sequel to the trip to India with Moravia and Elsa Morante); in September 1961 (from n. 34 to n. 36, to present Accattone at the Venice Festival); between May and July 1962 (nos. 22, 24, 26 and 27 are missing, for the production of Mamma Roma); between October and December 1963 (in issues 41, 43, 44, 46, 48, 50 and 51 the column does not appear due to overwork to which the writer himself alludes in issue 52, of 27 December). For the whole of 1963, and most of 1964, the column was suspended, and only in October of that year did Pasolini decide to resume it, proposing it to the new director, Paolo Bracaglia Morante (see the letter to Mauro Alicata in LE II, pp. 565-7). From the moment of resumption (n. 43) to the definitive interruption of the column, two more breaks: between March and April 1965 (n. 12, 13, 14, for the trip to Morocco) and between July and August of the same year (n. 30 and 31, for «a short holiday», as we read in n. 32).

FROM «IL CHAOS» ON «TIME»

The column Il chaos is held by Pasolini in «Tempo» from issue no. 32 of 6 August 1968 at n. 4 of 24 January 1970, with much greater regularity than the similar column in «Vie Nuove» (in «Tempo» the column is never missing for more than one issue). A selection of the pieces published in «Tempo» is published by Gian Carlo Ferretti with the title Il chaos, Editori Riuniti, Rome 1961 (reprint with introduction in abridged form «l'Unità»-Editori Riuniti, Rome 1981). The volume I dialogues, cit., edited by Giovanni Falaschi, collects all the texts published in «Tempo», alongside those published in «Vie Nuove». The same choice is proposed again in the volume I dialogues, cit., together with other texts published in the Dialoghi con Pasolini column and a summary which includes the non-anthologised responses. The AP typescript of almost all the pieces of «Tempo» is preserved (carbon copies of originals sent to the magazine, most likely with handmade corrections inserted into the printed texts, which we reproduce here as always). In AP there are also letters relating to the beginning and end of the column, including the letter-contract signed Giancarlo Palazzi, dated 16 July 1968 (the column, we read, «will be dedicated, divided into 2, 3 or 4 pieces , to the interpretation or commentary of political, news, cultural or worldly events" at the exclusive choice of Pasolini; each episode will receive the compensation of 150,000 lire and the first will be published in issue 32 of the current year).

In «Tempo» several «conversations» or «bickerings with the public» had taken place in those years (as Giancarlo Vigorelli, presenting the new column in issue 32), which had been taken on in order by Massimo Bontempelli, Curzio Malaparte, Salvatore Quasimodo. To Carlo Betocchi, Pasolini

announced in July 1968 that he had agreed to replace Quasimodo, without yet specifying the title he would choose for his weekly space (LE II, pp. 646-7). From the AP material it appears that the editorial staff of the magazine had made specific requests to Pasolini: not one, but three or four answers together, so as not to fall into the pattern of the article; themes not exploited elsewhere; preference to be given to "news topics" or "problems of the moment", avoiding "abstract" or "far from the interests of our reader" topics (so Nicola Cattedra, editor of the weekly, in a letter dated 30 June 1968). During 1969 the friction with the magazine, which left Pasolini little freedom, worsened. Cattedra himself, on 20 January 1970, admitted having operated on the no. 4 large cuts and to have given instructions for the column in n. 5 would not be released, as it was dedicated to strictly political topics, and not, as expected, current affairs or news:

> As you will see in issue 5 of Tempo your address book does not appear. You may also have noticed that in the previous issue I made a big cut to Chaos. It's not about censorship because I wouldn't allow it with you, like with any other Tempo collaborator, and because it's not part of my duties. But it is part of my tasks and my duties towards the readers to make other choices.
> The column does not appear, and I tell you this clearly, only because you deal with specifically political, or rather I would say technically political, topics which do not fall within the theme of Chaos. You can answer me that everything is political and I reply that I am not talking about the ideological judgments that you give, but about the choice of topics which, especially in the last few issues, have been restricted to politics, topics which are already widely debated by the newspaper in the appropriate rubrics.

The column is thus interrupted, and the director informs Pasolini of this on March 3:

> I wanted to verbally communicate to you my decision to suspend Chaos forever. And since my relationship with you is not marked by "cynicism", I would have expressed my sincere regret to you on that occasion.
> The reasons for this decision are to be found in the unfavorable reactions of Tempo's audience (certainly not all) to your column. Reactions not always due to divergent political or ideological positions, but often to the language which, due to its complexity, in many cases became incomprehensible to the public who expects from a weekly like ours [sic].
> The controversies, more suitable for "experts", on semantics or on cinema, about the value of which I have no doubts, were not appreciated by the majority of Tempo's readers who expected, as happened in the columns that appeared previously, a dialogue on the problems of every day.

The writer alludes to the cessation of Chaos in the sequel to Trasumanar e organizer (April 1971), attributing it to his observations on the false "equidistance" of certain men in power who in reality support the right (see SLA, pp. 2603-5). Starting from November 1962 Pasolini became the weekly's literary critic, replacing Giancarlo Vigorelli, and an editorial note reported this by recalling, among other things, with some embarrassment, the disagreement at the origin of the suspension of Chaos:

> Pier Paolo Pasolini is the new literary critic of «Tempo illustrato»: he succeeds Giancarlo Vigorelli, who leaves the position due to other important work commitments. This by Pasolini is a return to the columns of our weekly. In fact, for two years he ran a column, Il chaos, which, with Curzio Malaparte's Battibecco, represents the highest and most active polemical point of the near past of «Tempo»: a moment also of laceration, because his signature , his civil commitment, his freedom as a witness, his courage to contradict himself, provoked, among some readers, violent stances, scandalized abandonments, indignant renunciations of subscriptions. But Pier Paolo Pasolini's The Chaos contributed to increasing the attention to our work of that part of public opinion which makes the profession of journalist more worth living.

Since the choice we made was necessarily rather stingy, we report here, taking it from the volume edited by Falaschi, the complete list of the episodes of the two Pasolini columns, both on «Vie Nuove» and on «Tempo»:

«DIALOGUES WITH PASOLINI» COLUMN OF «VIE NUOVE»

In the year 15, 1960

1 [P. declares that he agrees to keep the column proposed to him by Macciocchi], n. 22, 28 May.

2 [reproduction of passages from Gramsci's Ashes and The Crying of the Digger], n. 23, 4 June.

3 [reproduction of a passage from A violent life] n. 24, 11 June.

4 [1] [2] [3] [4], n. 25, 18 June.

5 [1] [2] [3] [4], n. 26, 25 June.

6 The intellectuals and the bases, Eisenhower's childishness, Flights of spies, n. 27, 2 July.

7 Pasternak and irrationality, Curiosities of the writer, Worldly life, n. 28, 9 July.

8 The awakening of young people, A system for studying, n. 29, 16 July.

9 Realism and neopurism, n. 30, 23 July.

10 More on young people, n. 31, 30 July.

11 The fort in the desert, The power of logic, n. 32, August 6.

12 The «Vie Nuove» album on the Reggio Emilia massacre, n. 33, August 20.

13 Fascist writings: cancel and make people pay, A demonstration of stupidity, n. 34, August 27.

14 [1] [2], n. 38, 24 September.

15 [1], n. 39, 1 October.

16 [1], n. 40, 8 October.

17 [1] [2], n. 41, October 15.

18 [1] [2], n. 44, November 5.

19 [1] [2] [3], n. 45, November 12.

20 A monument to D'Annunzio, n. 46, November 19.

21 [1] [2], n. 47, November 26.

22 [1], n. 48, 3 December.

23 Invitation to Calabria, n. 49, 10 December.

24 Opinions on censorship, n. 50, 17 December.

25 The life of the miners, n. 51, December 24.

26 The clericals and the family, n. 52, 31 December.

Year XVI, 1961

27 The Cuban revolution, The «young people», n. 1, 7 January.

28 Morality and communism, Philosophical thought in Russia, n. 2, January 14.

29 How to enroll in the Fgci, Conversations with schoolmates, [3], n. 3, January 21.

30 Passion and ideology, n. 4, January 28.

31 The censor and the «Arialda», Art and pornography, n. 10, 11 March.

32 Moravia and Antonioni, n. 11, 18 March.

33 Clarity and honesty, Italian and Hungarian literature, n. 12, 25 March.

34 A film about the Resistance, n. 13, April 1st.

35 The reasons for piety, Our public schools, n. April 15th, 15th.

36 Discussion on Carducci, The monstrosities of censorship, n. 17, 29 April.

37 Fight against Pharisaism (which is everywhere), n. 18, 6 May.

38 Readings for beautiful souls, The chicken and the egg, n. 19, 13 May.

39 Catholic indifference, Toma doma, n. 20, 20 May.

40 Mysticism and history, Man is historical, Impossible hopes, Personal note, n. 21, 27 May.

41 The freedom of Malagodi, Carducci's «production», Personal note, n. 22, 3 June.

42 Anguish and trust, n. 23, 10 June.

43 Demagogy as a class element, Personal Note, n. 24, 17 June.

44 The merits of communism, Splitting the "two moments", Ideology for all, n. 25, 24 June.

45 Accattone and Tommasino, n. 26, July 1st.

46 Current injustice, n. 27, 8 July.

47 My brother, n. 28, 15 July.

48 Dannunzians in slippers, n. 29, 22 July.

49 Bandung, capital of half of Italy, An easier language, n. 30, 29 July.

50 Should I baptize my son?, We don't talk about politics here..., The artist is a citizen, A moving story, n. 31, 5 August.

51 The barbarity of racism, [2], n. 32, August 12.

52 Capital punishment, Class verdicts, The thought of death, n. 33, August 1.

53 The best pages, Sectarianism makes us inhuman, Discussion on «reality», A wrong speech, n. 37, 23 September.

54 More on D'Annunzio, n. 38, 30 September.

55 Illiterate up to 21 years old, The world is not mad, Dostoevsky and Victor Hugo, n. 39, 7 October.

56 The fascist's taboos, A force for peace, n. 40, October 14.

57 [1], n. 41, October 21.

58 Poetry, cinema, politics, n. 42, October 28.

59 A controversy on politics and poetry, n. 44, November 9.

60 Salinari: response and reply, n. 45, November 16.

61 Poor privileges, First act of conscience, n. 46, November 23.

62 Marxism and religiosity, n. 47, November 30.

63 Fascism as a drug, n. 48, 7 December.

64 Communism must not be an alibi, Where is the filth, The fate of the slanderers, n. 49, December 14.

65 Bernardino, brother of Benedetto, b. 51, 20 December.

Year XVII, 1962

66 Non-violence, Existentialism and socialism, Contemporary painting, n. 1, 4 January.

67 Personal letters, I must defend myself, n. 10, 8 March.

68 Sincerity and more, Bad readings, n. 11, 15 March.

69 Everyone's adventure, n. 12, 22 March.

70 The idea of being privileged, The defense weapon, n. 13, 29 March.

71 An asymmetrical letter, Intellectuals and curious, n. 14, 5 April.

72 The «turncoat», Discovery of Tommasino, n. 15, 12 April.

73 Duty of the poet, Who has not understood, On mythology, n. 16, 19 April.

74 He refuses to the future, The vestal of compromise, n. 17, 26 April.

75 Fear of death, Culture against neurosis, n. 18, 3 May.

76 The era of alienation, Don't make a noise, n. 19, 10 May.

77 The courage to live, The poet among the mad, n. 20, 17 May.

78 Jargon and language, Men because workers, Resignation and non-violence, n. 21, 24 May.

79 Low-cut classics, A pretext for the alienated, n. 23, 7 June.

80 Old Hats Pride, no. 25, 21 June.

81 Like a childhood nightmare - They only read one title, n. 28, 12 July.

82 The words of Jesus and the words of Marx, n. 30, 26 July.

83 Reading within oneself, Suffering and horror, n. 31, August 2.

84 A judgment on Cassola, Shameful trial, n. 33, August 16.

85 Behind the Gospel, Good Words, n. 34, August 23.

86 A poetic flight, Violence and no, n. 35, 30 August.

87 Fascists: fathers and sons, n. 36, 6 September.

88 [1] [2] [3], n. 37, 13 September.

89 The years of anger, The anger, n. 38, 20 September.

90 Linguistic prestige, The poor Latin, n. 39, 27 September.

91 The film and the critics, Outburst for «Mamma Roma», n. 40, 4 October.

92 We are not accomplices, «... a force from the Past», n. 42, October 18.

93 Navigation to Cuba, n. 45, November 8.

94 Response to a "dissatisfied", n. 47, November 22.

95 This society, Cinema and poetry, n. 49, 6 December.

96 Before departure, From «Le belle flagi», n. 52, December 27.

Year XIX, 1964

97 After a year - Who can be scandalized - The problems on the table, n. 42, October 15.

98 [1], Red Gospel, The unsent reply, n. 43, October 22.

99 The "gospel" and the conversation - Who is the enemy of Christ, n. 44, October 29.

100 Arbitrary accusation, [2], Religion and religiosity, n. 45, November 5.

101 The woman guide, New prehistory, Inside history, n. 46, November 12.

102 Is the Gospel "ahistorical"? - 3 responses to «New World», n. 47, November 19.

103 Naivety and schematism, n. 48, November 26.

104 The committed intellectual - A crisis without a past, n. 49, 3 December.

105 Expressivity versus instrumentality - A problem for everyone, n. 50, 10 December.

106 The sin of compromise, The rhetoric of hatred, n. 51, December 17.

107 Theology of return - To all readers, n. 52, December 24.

In the year 20, 1965

108 I defend «Red Desert», n. 1, 7 January.

109 Poetry in the form of polemic, n. 2, January 14.

110 Renewing yourself from «ghosts», n. 4, January 28.

111 The «historical zero», Difficult to be easy, Compromises, n. 5, 4 February.

112 A denied toast, From introductory verses to «Rio della Grana», n. 6, 11 February.

113 Technological language - Linguistic protest, n. 7, 18 February.

114 Signal names, Aesthetic-moral revolt, n. 8, 25 February.

115 Two lines on Gramsci's language, n. 9, 4 March.

116 «Oral» Italian and the actors, n. 11, 18 March.

117 A poetic "if" - La vera cultura, n. April 15th, 15th.

118 Trip to Morocco, n. 16, 22 April.

119 Birds and little birds. I: l'aigle, n. 17, 29 April.

120 [Birds and little birds] II: Falcons and sparrows, n. 18, May 6.

121 [Birds and little birds] III: Le corbeau, n. 19, 13 May.

122 The eagle and the prey - The Third World test, n. 20, 20 May.

123 The reasons for non-love, n. 21, 27 May.

124 Let's readjust the viewfinder, n. 22, 3 June.

125 Left-wing pessimism, n. 24, 17 June.

126 Economic situation and well-being, Crisis and parties, The pimple and the mirror, n. 25, 24 June.

127 Left-wing optimism, Who is outside of history, n. 26, July 1st.

128 Collective courage, n. 27, 8 July.

129 Two testimonies, Two crises, n. 28, 15 July.

130 Ideological embezzlement?, n. 29, 22 July.

131 Inside Marxism, At the center of the future, n. 32, August 12.

132 Culture after the «commitment», n. 34, August 26.

133 Real liberalization - New topics, n. 38, 23 September.

134 Another farewell - The figure of the writer, n. 39, 30 September.

«IL CHAOS» COLUMN IN THE WEEKLY «TEMPO»

In the year 30, 1968

1 The reason for this column - No pact or plea bargain - A very contagious disease - Where is the intellectual, n. 32, August 6.

2 The case of an intellectual - Braibanti's refusal - The crime of being alone - The fear of scandal - The reform of the codes, n. 33, August 13.

3 A hatred that is difficult to imagine - The social effects of the sun - The squalid literary world - The technical problem of children - Rude and violent twenty-year-olds, n. 34, August 20.

4 Why no to the Strega and yes to the festival, The world saved by children, n. 35, August 27.

5 The fear of being eaten, An unpleasant letter, n. 36, 3 September.

6 «We get killed» - In Venice they weren't joking - Only frenetic pride - A Bourbon official, n. 37, 10 September.

7 What happened in Venice - There are also fascists - The government man arrives - Order does not arise from order, n. 38, 14 September.

8 Letter to the Prime Minister - A claim to real democracy - Government guilty of violence - An old and intolerable idea, n. 39, 21 September.

9 The Pope's criticisms - The need for a "real democracy" - On the threshold of a schism? - Now the Pope finds himself disarmed, n. 40, 28 September.

10 Response to President Leone - A play of light and shadow - I saw police violence - Left-wing fascism, n. 41, 5 October.

11 Q&A with Moravia - When literature is action - What meaning do the barricades have - Intellectuals without choice, n. 42, 12 October.

12 A man of the future - A monstrous creation - Half empty seminars, Has Vietnam gone out of fashion? - The false battles - Tragic ambiguities, More on Braibanti, n. 43, October 19.

13 An extraordinary film - The spectator becomes the judge - Immersed in the old cinema, In my opinion it is racism, n. 44, October 26.

14 The will not to be a father, A few words about Nenni, The terrorist hitmen, The regret of the code, n. 46, November 9.

15 Open letter to Silvana Mangano, Bassani: history of a delirium, Old age of a modern man, n. 47, November 16.

16 «Dialogues» on cinema and theater - Time destroys purity - Artists, experience and imagination, n. 48, November 23.

17 Panagulis: not this time, Dutschke's maturity, A certain Ninetto - The moralists are served, n. 49, November 30.

18 Diary for a man condemned to death - A ghetto for Panagulis too - The students cause panic - We are only here to fight, n. 50, 7 December.

19 The students of «Red Shadows» - Poetry is not a commodity, The «battles of the avant-garde», n. 51, 14 December.

20 For a democratic police, Catholic protesters, Letter from a housewife, n. 52, 21 December.

21 Journalists, commentators and TV, Drugs and culture, n. 53, December 28.

In the year 30, 1969

22 Festivities and consumerism, Vulgar protests, Why I don't like Nino, Salvadore and peace on TV, Passion doesn't change at the stadium, n. 1, 4 January.

23 My provocative independence, Masters and students, Best wishes to the reader, n. 2, 11 January.

24 I am in a very cheerful mood, I challenge my detractor, Welcome is of no use, n. 4, 25 January.

25 The «consumed» Moon, Non-Italian Italy, Comisso: a pure writer, n. 5, February 1st.

26 Comisso man and writer, L'inedito, The «crocodiles», n. 6, 8 February.

27 Prague: an atrocious freedom, Petty-bourgeois involution, Baghdad: brutal massacres, Sanremo: poor idiocies, Accusation of weakness, n. 7, 15 February.

28 Arpino, Benvenuti e lo sport, The «outside history», I respond to Pampaloni, n. 8, 22 February.

29 «Theorem»: I let off steam a bit, An empty and desperate question, A day in Bologna, n. 9, March 1st.

30 Don Andrea: a life "on loan", Clear words on Palach, My worst enemies, n. 10, 8 March.

31 Fortini's obsessions - A poem remade, In the countryside with Soffici, n. 11, 15 March.

32 A sacrilegious transformation, «Italia Nostra» will achieve nothing, n. 12, 22 March.

33 There are still fictional lives, A human subspecies, n. 13, 29 March.

34 Remorse for the killed dog, Disappointments and confirmations, An unloved child, The mechanical-tabernacles, n. 14, 5 April.

35 The ceremonial of violence, The whims of poets, I dreamed of a verse, Cohn-Bendit has fun, n. 15, 12 April.

36 The problems of the church - Official religious vocations, Meeting with the Living, n. 16, 19 April.

37 One hour and fifty minutes from New York, Queen's College-5th Avenue, Along the banks of the Euphrates, n. 18, 3 May.

38 Monsters and little monsters, The pastries of Beirut, The face of Merckx, Blood donors, n. 19, 10 May.

39 The goliardic hats, Zeffirelli: «a cowardly action», Soldati: «moving writer», Repression and coercion, n. 20, 17 May.

40 A boy from the people, A left-wing student, A young conformist, Meetings at the «Giro», n. 22, 31 May.

41 Mercks victories are scandals, Importance of a new director, Pornography is boring, n. 23, 7 June.

42 The idea of the scapegoat, Letter from Cappadocia - A world in destruction - Disguised as "poor", n. 25, 21 June.

43 A fatal way of being, The great anguish of the party, A revolt killed by pride, A procession advances: it is Callas, n. 26, 28 June.

44 The goliards of via Veneto, The prisoners of Parma, n. 27, 5 July.

45 Two parallel events, The other freedom, which kills, The rights of life, It's all outdoors, A letter to read, n. 29, 19 July.

46 Neo-Nazi hunt, Autobiographical glories, Helping the poet, Juvenile neurosis, n. 30, 26 July.

47 A great historical fact - After the conquest of the moon - A word to reevaluate, A fault of the old, I apologize to Bononi, n. 32, August 9.

48 Prehistoric footprints, Emptying the sea, The bridge of '43, Offended eyes, The pearl, n. 33, August 16.

49 Servile science, Dialogue and recovery, Some reading, n. 35, 30 August.

50 Liberty in plain clothes, Some banalities, About lynchings, The writer, n. 36, 6 September.

51 Humiliate, A bit of Ostrogoth, One year ago, n. 37, 13 September.

52 Private miseries - Employment and not, I, instead..., Without elbowing, Demonstrated, Quoting Brecht, A soul full of grace, n. 38, 20 September.

53 Dear Pier Paolo, - Dear Alberto, Borghesi a Parigi, n. 39, 27 September.

54 More heart than head, Dear Pier Paolo, - Dear Alberto, Positive contributions, n. 40, 4 October.

55 The brand - In the heart of the cyclone - They are all poor, From hell, n. 41, October 11.

56 Examination of conscience, The foolish servants, The crowd, what is it?, n. 42, October 18.

57 Pessimism and smiles, Chills of frost, Customs, The poet's writing, Humanity type 2, n. 43, October 25.

58 Canzonissima (with blush), Egocentrici, Stealing the trade, n.44, 1 November.

59 The worker's cough, Letters on the beach, Marco's truth, n. 45, November 8.

60 Moment of anger, That motorcycle headlight, Dear Pier Paolo - Dear Arbasino, n. 47, November 22.

61 Allegro, Minichiello, Sport and songs, Sensitivity, Pasolini - Gentile Latorraca, n. 48, November 29.

62 The moon in madness, Doing and thinking, Relaxation, Eleven poems, Dear Visconti, n. 49, 6 December.

63 Embarrassing innocence - Simple thoughts, The pessimist, Letter to Anna Magnani, n. 50, 13 December.

64 Looking around, Seriousness and fractions, Breaking the mirror, A murderer, The other road, n. 51, 20 December.

65 Three injustices, Smania for action, n. 52, December 27.

In the year 32, 1970

66 Happy birthday!, Thinking of Debray, «The man destroyer of the world» - ... in Casarsa, n. 1, 3 January.

67 Gentile Malagodi, Gentile Ferri, To the trainees, Averagely - Dear Average Man, In equal measure - Distinction, n. 2, 10 January.

68 Two letters - The underworld, Inside culture, Already done, n. 3, January 17.

69 Letter from an emigrant - The image and the problems, n. 4, 24 January.

[digitizer's note: the following notes are also inserted as an endnote on the pages to which they refer, the page number reported here is that of the printed text]

p. 877: Maria Antonietta Macciocchi was director of «Vie Nuove» until n. 43 of 2 November 1961. about her On her relationship with Pasolini, cf. BUT. Macciocchi, Two thousand years of happiness, Mondadori, Milan 1983 (in particular pp. 327-35).

The film Pasolini is working on is Accattone; the volume of essays is Passion and ideology, the novel on which he says he is "betting everything" is II Rio della Grana, which will never be written (see the news on the fragment with the same title which merged into Alì dall'occhi azzurri, RR II , pp.1962-4). The three screenplays are probably Una giorno balorda (for Mauro Bolognini), Il carroto dell'8 cielo (for Gianni Puccini) and La lungo notte del '43 (for Florestano Vancini). But see the dialogue of 9 July 1960, in which Pasolini also recalls the screenplays of La vita screama and Il Gobbo.

p. 878: For the "literary anecdote" between Verga and Di Giovanni, cf. Noterella on a Verga-Di Giovanni controversy, in SLA, pp. 666.

The novel, still unpublished, set in Friuli is The Dream of a Thing.

p. 885: The controversy with Carlo Cassola starts from a session for the awarding of the Strega Prize (27 June 1960), in which Pasolini, who presented Calvino's The Non-Existent Knight, read one of his "Shakespearean jokes" in verse (later published in Religione of my time with the title In death of realism); Cassola was accused, among other things, of being a revisionist, neo-purist and white socialist.

p. 886: On 30 June 1960 the left-wing forces took to the streets in Genoa to prevent the national congress of the MSI from being held in the city; the congress was postponed, but the protest spread to other cities, becoming a protest against the fascist pollution of the Tambroni government. The police killed one protester and injured five in Licata, killed five and injured nineteen in Reggio Emilia; other clashes occurred in Palermo, Catania, Florence and Rome.

p. 891: Stalin's "famous essay", in which the positions of the linguist N.Y. are criticized. Marr is J. Stalin, Marxism and linguistics, Editori Riuniti, Rome 1954.

p. 894: Pasolini had spoken about Centone, Henry Corbani and Fausto Tanza, in the essay Il neosperimentalismo, published in «Officina» in 1956, then in PI (see SLA, p. 1224).

p. 895: The epigram «against the politics of the Vatican» is To a Pope.

p. 898: In August 1960, Nazi criminal Adolf Eichmann was captured in Argentina by Israeli intelligence and brought to Israel to stand trial.

p. 900: Urbano Cioccetti was mayor of Rome from 1958 to 1961; the law referred to was a law of 1939 (made then to prevent exodus from the countryside), which was abolished in 1961.

p. 912: Achille Lauro, founder of the shipping company of the same name, a monarchist, was mayor of Naples, with some interruptions, from 1951 to 1958.

p. 914: D'Annunzio left from Ronchi dei Legionari, in the province of Gorizia, in 1919 for the Fiume campaign.

p. 923: L'Arialda, by Giovanni Testori, was staged in 1960 by the Morelli-Stoppa company, directed by Luchino Visconti; Pasolini talks about it as one of the most important shows of the year, in Il Teatro in Italia (see SLA, p. 2358).

Carlo Trombi was the Attorney General of the Republic at the Court of Appeal of Milan; Carmelo Spagnuolo was a prosecutor at the Court of Milan.

p. 930: Tempo di musica, directed by Daniele D'Anza, was a program on the evolution of Italian musical tastes; the MSI was offended by what was said about the fascist regime in the first episode, so Fanfani, then Prime Minister, intervened to recommend that "wounds not be reopened" among Italians; the director did not accept the censor's cuts and resigned.

p. 931: Alberto Sordi actually appeared as a partisan in Dino Risi's film Una vita difficile in 1961.

p. 933: The Pasolini verses cited by the reader belong to a text published in n. 3 of «Vie Nuove» (21 January 1961); see it now in BE, p. 1707.

p. 934: The "July deaths" are those who died during the street demonstrations, already mentioned, against the Tambroni government, which took place in July 1960.

p. 940: The "event" in which Pasolini was "implicated as a peacemaker" occurred on 30 June 1960: Pasolini had picked up in his car in Via di Panico, in Rome, two boys he knew and who seemed to be fleeing from a fight ; the accusation of aiding and abetting caused a great sensation; on 16 November 1961 Pasolini was acquitted due to insufficient evidence, on appeal two years later he was acquitted for not having committed the crime.

p. 950: A review by Carlo Bo of the Religion of my time had appeared in the «Europeo» of 25 June 1961.

p. 960: Alberto Asor Rosa had reviewed The religion of my time in «Mondo Nuovo» of 30 July 1961.

p. 970: Carlo Salinari had reviewed The religion of my time in «Vie Nuove» of 2 September 1961 (Diagnosis for Pasolini).

p. 975: The controversy between Salinari and Pasolini «in the unforgettable 1956» had taken place on the pages of «Contemporaneo», starting from a Pasolini essay entitled The Position, published in «Officina», and due to an ungenerous review in the Italian Canzoniere , written for «Contemporaneo» by the Sicilian poet Vann'Antò (see note relating to Popular poetry, in SLA).

p. 978: The lines «Africa! my only / alternative" come from the Fragment to death (in the Religion of my time).

p. 986: In a dialogue of 15 March 1962, Pasolini explains the term «cenesthesis» as «the psychophysical balance on which we rest: our vital horizon».

p. 988: Thou Shalt Not Kill is a 1961 film by Claude Autant-Lara, starring Laurent Terzieff, against the death penalty.

p. 991: The young Bernardino De Santis told the police that on 18 November 1961 an unknown man had entered the bar attached to the petrol station owned by his brother Benedetto, on the road leading to S. Felice al Circeo, and threatened him with a gun « loaded with gold pellets", he had attempted to rob the proceeds. The boy then saw the stranger pass by again the following day, aboard a Giulietta; The boy's story cost Pasolini an indictment for armed robbery, illegal possession of a firearm and threats. In July 1962 Pasolini was sentenced to 20 days in prison, and only in 1965 was he acquitted due to insufficient evidence.

p. 993: The verses Pasolini talks about are those from the Ballata delle Madre, actually published in «Paragone» in February 1962 (then in Poesia in forma di rosa); Persecution is one of the provisional titles of Poetry in the form of a rose.

p. 1012: In reality Cassola's first two books, Alla peripheral and La visita, were published in 1942.

p. 1039: Palmiro Togliatti died on 21 August 1964.

p. 1050: The article in «Rinascita» to which Pasolini refers is Nuove question linguistici (26 December 1964), then in EE.

p. 1100: Aldo Braibanti, professor of philosophy, former communist partisan, was sentenced on 14 July 1968 to nine years for plagiarism against the young Giovanni Sanfratello, with whom he had a homosexual relationship. The sentence caused a scandal because the judges resorted to a crime

foreseen by the Rocco code, which had remained unapplied until then. Only in 1981 a ruling from the Constitutional Court removed him from the penal code.

p. 1102: In the typescript "they" are explicitly the judges; just as, in the typescript, the "madness" of the lawyer Dall'Ora is spoken of: it is difficult to say whether it is censorship by the weekly or self-censorship. However, the Milanese lawyer Alberto Dall'Ora responded to this attack by Pasolini with a letter of protest addressed to the director and published in the no. 43 of 19 October 1968, in Pasolini's column.

p. 1106: Pasolini also reviewed Morante's book in verse: cf. The world saved by kids, in Trasumanar e organiser.

p. 1114: Following this dispute, Pasolini will be tried with Zavattini, Maselli, Massobrio, Ferreri and others for «having disturbed the peaceful possession of others by staying beyond the established time in some rooms of the Palazzo del Cinema» and for not having observed "the order to vacate the room they occupied".

p. 1118: The «Rome newspaper» to which Pasolini refers is «Il Tempo».

p. 1123: Regarding the Brancati Prize of Zafferana Etnea, cf. the article To a country the "literary power", in this same volume.

p. 1128: Cardinal Koenig, primate of the progressive Austrian Church, had played an important role during the Second Vatican Council.

p. 1129: In July 1968 the Mexican government had harshly repressed the student revolt, to avoid subsequent riots at the time of the Olympics.

p. 1131: Ercole Patti wrote the film criticism column in «Tempo».

p. 1138: The poem Nenni was published in Avanti! of 31 December 1960 (see it now in BE, pp. 1717-20).

p. 1140: For the judicial events linked to Teorema, cf. the note to To protest I can only stay at home, in this same volume.

p. 1145: Betocchi's book of poems, published by Mondadori in 1967, is One step, another step.

p. 1160: During a strike for the renewal of the employment contract, on 2 December 1968, there was a clash between demonstrators and police in Avola, and two laborers were killed.

p. 1172: The screenplay of San Paolo was published posthumously by Einaudi, in 1977.

p. 1178: Comisso's "unpublished diary", of which Pasolini publishes a page, was released in that same 1969, by Longanesi, with the title Diario 1951-1964.

p. 1181: Jan Palach died on January 19, 1969, a few days after setting himself on fire in protest against the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia.

p. 1183: Traces of Pasolini's stay in Czechoslovakia, dating back to January 1965, are found in the introductory verses to the Rio della Grana (in BE, pp. 1790-2), in Canto IV of the Divina Mimesis and in the drama Bestia da stile.

p. 1188: Gabriella Degli Esposti, born in Crespellano (Bo) in 1912 to a peasant family, was captured and shot in Castelfranco Veneto in 1944; she is the gold medal of the Resistance.

p. 1199: The investigation The novel is dead, by Alcide Paolini, was published in three installments in the «Giorno» on 29 January, 26 February and 12 March 1969.

p. 1207: cf. the note to the Diary of the "Lavorini case", in this same volume.

p. 1223: The exact title of the film, from 1966, is Sandor's Despairers.

p. 1230: Eugenio Montale, Fuori di casa, Ricciardi, Milan-Naples 1969; Fulvio Tomizza, The Tree of Dreams, Mondadori, Milan 1969.

p. 1254: In Zafferana the Brancati Prize, awarded to Michele Pantaleone for Anti-Mafia: a missed opportunity, it had been violently contested, and the carabinieri had had to intervene. As can be seen from the manuscripts, Pasolini had intended for n. 42 of the column a violent protest against the behavior of the left in this matter, but the piece (which in the Dialogues edited by Falaschi is published in the Appendix, and which we republish here) was evidently censored:

It wasn't very pleasant to be escorted from Zafferana to Catania by the police. It happened to me the other night. And then naturally it was held against me by the fascist newspapers: due to which an atmosphere (and miserable attempts) of lynching had been created against me and the other jurors of the Zafferana Prize. The circle of blackmail thus closed. The winner of the Prize was a book by Pantaleone, Antimafia: a missed opportunity: a precise and courageous book by a man who, almost ascetic and with absolute humility, has been fighting for twenty years, at risk (as we recalled in the motivation for the Prize) of their own safety. I find it truly very strange and humiliating that the left-wing newspapers, including "l'Unità", did not report on this award. Pantaleone is precisely one of those left-wing men whose existence "l'Unità" should boast about in its controversies with the Russian benchwarmers. It's shameful that he didn't do it, absolutely shameful.

p. 1257: The article by Arbasino, from which the quote is taken, is The Revolt of the Authors, in the «Corriere della Sera» of 10 October 1969.

p. 1260: The edition of Canzonissima that Pasolini deals with here is the one directed by Antonello Falqui, authors Terzoli, Vaime and Verde, protagonists Johnny Dorelli, Raimondo Vianello and the Kessler twins.

p. 1262: For Marco Baldisseri, cf. the news relating to the Diary of the «Lavorini case», in this same volume.

p. 1273: Régis Debray, a Castro and Guevarist French intellectual, was imprisoned in Bolivia in September 1969.

Notes in the text

[←1]

[this note and the following ones were inserted by the editors, they are also reported at the end of the chapter “Notes..”]

Maria Antonietta Macciocchi was director of «Vie Nuove» until n. 43 of 2 November 1961. about her On her relationship with Pasolini, cf. BUT. Macciocchi, Two thousand years of happiness, Mondadori, Milan 1983 (in particular pp. 327-35).

[←2]

The film Pasolini is working on is Accattone; the volume of essays is Passion and ideology, the novel on which he says he is "betting everything" is II Rio della Grana, which will never be written (see the news on the fragment with the same title which merged into Alì dall'occhi azzurri, RR II , pp.1962-4). The three screenplays are probably Una giorno balorda (for Mauro Bolognini), Il carroto dell'8 cielo (for Gianni Puccini) and La lungo notte del '43 (for Florestano Vancini). But see the dialogue of 9 July 1960, in which Pasolini also recalls the screenplays of La vita screama and Il Gobbo.

[←3]

For the "literary anecdote" between Verga and Di Giovanni, cf. Noterella on a Verga-Di Giovanni controversy, in SLA, pp. 666.

[←4]

The novel, still unpublished, set in Friuli is The Dream of a Thing.

[←5]

The controversy with Carlo Cassola started from a session for the awarding of the Strega Prize (27 June 1960), in which Pasolini, who presented Calvino's The Non-Existent Knight, read one of his "Shakespearean jokes" in verse (later published in the Religion of my time with the title In death of realism); Cassola was accused, among other things, of being a revisionist, neo-purist and white socialist.

[←6]

On 30 June 1960, left-wing forces took to the streets of Genoa to prevent the national congress of the MSI from being held in the city; the congress was postponed, but the protest spread to other cities, becoming a protest against the fascist pollution of the Tambroni government. The police killed one protester and injured five in Licata, killed five and injured nineteen in Reggio Emilia; other clashes occurred in Palermo, Catania, Florence and Rome.

[←7]

Stalin's "famous essay", in which the positions of the linguist N.Y. are criticized. Marr is J. Stalin, Marxism and linguistics, Editori Riuniti, Rome 1954.

[←8]

Pasolini had spoken about Centone, Henry Corbani and Fausto Tanza, in the essay Il neosperimentalismo, published in «Officina» in 1956, then in PI (see SLA, p. 1224).

[←9]

The epigram «against the politics of the Vatican» is To a Pope.

[←10]

In August 1960, Nazi criminal Adolf Eichmann was captured in Argentina by Israeli intelligence and brought to Israel to stand trial.

[←11]

Urbano Cioccetti was mayor of Rome from 1958 to 1961.

[←12]

The law referred to was a 1939 law (made then to prevent exodus from the countryside), which was abolished in 1961.

[←13]

Achille Lauro, founder of the shipping company of the same name, a monarchist, was mayor of Naples, with some interruptions, from 1951 to 1958.

[←14]

D'Annunzio left from Ronchi dei Legionari, in the province of Gorizia, in 1919 for the Fiume venture.

[←15]

L'Arialda, by Giovanni Testori, was staged in 1960 by the Morelli-Stoppa company, directed by Luchino Visconti; Pasolini talks about it as one of the most important shows of the year, in Il Teatro in Italia (see SLA, p. 2358).

[←16]

Carlo Trombi was the Attorney General of the Republic at the Court of Appeal of Milan; Carmelo Spagnuolo was a prosecutor at the Court of Milan.

[←17]

Tempo di musica, directed by Daniele D'Anza, was a program on the evolution of Italian musical tastes; the MSI was offended by what was said about the fascist regime in the first episode, so Fanfani, then Prime Minister, intervened to recommend that "wounds not be reopened" among Italians; the director did not accept the censor's cuts and resigned.

[←18]

Alberto Sordi actually appeared as a partisan in Dino Risi's film Una vita difficile in 1961.

[←19]

The Pasolini verses cited by the reader belong to a text published in issue no. 3 of «Vie Nuove» (21 January 1961); see it now in BE, p. 1707.

[←20]

The "July deaths" are those who died during the street demonstrations, already mentioned, against the Tambroni government, which took place in July 1960.

[←21]

The "event" in which Pasolini was "implicated as a peacemaker" occurred on 30 June 1960: Pasolini had picked up two boys he knew in his car in Via di Panico, Rome, who appeared to be fleeing from a fight; the accusation of aiding and abetting caused a great sensation; on 16 November 1961 Pasolini was acquitted due to insufficient evidence, on appeal two years later he was acquitted for not having committed the crime.

[←22]

A review by Carlo Bo of the Religion of my time had appeared in the «Europeo» of 25 June 1961.

[←23]

Alberto Asor Rosa had reviewed The Religion of My Time in «Mondo Nuovo» on 30 July 1961.

[←24]

Carlo Salinari had reviewed The religion of my time in «Vie Nuove» of 2 September 1961 (Diagnosis for Pasolini).

[←25]

The controversy between Salinari and Pasolini «in the unforgettable 1956» had taken place on the pages of «Contemporaneo», starting from a Pasolini essay entitled The Position, published in «Officina», and due to an ungenerous review in the Canzoniere Italiano, written for the «Contemporaneo» by the Sicilian poet Vann'Antò (see note relating to Popular poetry, in SLA).

[←26]

The lines «Africa! my only / alternative" come from the Fragment to death (in the Religion of my time).

[←27]

In a dialogue of 15 March 1962, Pasolini explains the term "cenesthesis" as "the psychophysical balance on which we rest: our vital horizon".

[←28]

Don't Kill is a 1961 film by Claude Autant-Lara, starring Laurent Terzieff, against the death penalty.

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The young Bernardino De Santis told the police that on 18 November 1961 an unknown man had entered the bar attached to the petrol station owned by his brother Benedetto, on the road leading to S. Felice al Circeo, and, threatening him with a pistol «loaded with gold pellets", he had attempted to rob the proceeds. The boy then saw the stranger pass by again the following day, aboard a Giulietta; The boy's story cost Pasolini an indictment for armed robbery, illegal possession of a firearm and threats. In July 1962 Pasolini was sentenced to 20 days in prison, and only in 1965 was he acquitted due to insufficient evidence.

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Ercole Patti wrote the film criticism column on «Tempo».

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The exact title of the film, from 1966, is Sandor's Despairers.

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Eugenio Montale, Outside the house, Ricciardi, Milan-Naples 1969.

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Fulvio Tomizza, The Tree of Dreams, Mondadori, Milan 1969.

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